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President von Hindenburg at the Funeral of General Hans von Plessen—December, 1929

HINDENBURG

The Man And the Legend

BY

MARGARET GOLDSMITH

AND

FREDERICK VOIGT

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TO OUR FRIEND

NORAH C. JAMES

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HINDENBURG

CHAPTER I

EARLY CHILDHOOD

HINDENBURG'S name appears in the German *Who's Who* of 1914, for every German general was included in this fat volume as a matter of course. He was not mentioned because he was in any way personally prominent. His biographical note is very brief: twelve other individuals are listed on the same page. This note, which reflects the gradual, but very regular advancements of a conscientious officer, concludes by mentioning the decorations conferred upon him during his forty-five years of military service: "Order of the Red Eagle (Fourth Class) with Swords; Iron Cross (Second Class;) Order of the Black Eagle."

Hindenburg was always popular among the officers and men of his command. He advanced step by step, during these forty-five years, from a second lieutenant to a brigadier-general. "His Emperor" conferred upon him the minimum number of medals consistent with his rank, but his own countrymen, and much less the world outside, had never heard of him until 1914. His entire public career, in fact, is concentrated in the fifteen years since the outbreak of the War. He is one of those

men to whom outward distinction comes late in life; he was sixty-seven years old before Germany at large heard of his existence.

Hindenburg himself never craved popularity or prominence. "The decisive factor in my life and actions," he writes in the introduction to his Memoirs, which appeared after the War, "was not a desire for any applause from the world. It was rather my own convictions, a sense of duty, and my own conscience which have guided me throughout my life." His entire career proves the sincerity of this statement.

Hindenburg's sense of duty and his freedom from vanity or false ambitions mark him out from many of his fellow-officers, but as far as his external success is concerned, there is nothing at all distinguished in the first sixty-seven years of his life. His early years are interesting only in so far as they are typical of a Prussian Junker's childhood, and as they throw light on the Spartan system of German education before the War.

A knowledge of his youth and an insight into his childhood are, however, important, for he is a man who, since his childhood, has never really altered his point of view in any of the essentials. The tremendous world events which he witnessed, the rise and fall of the German Empire, or the birth

of the new French Republic in 1871, seem to have left very little impression on his mind or character. In his childhood he worshiped God, his Fatherland, his King, and Frederick the Great. As an old man of eighty-three he is still inwardly loyal to the same deities. Now, as in his childhood, he worships Duty to the Fatherland above all else, although this Fatherland has now become a Republic.

There are people, even in Germany, who are suspicious of his staunch loyalty to the Republic. It does, indeed, seem irreconcilable with his passionate devotion to the ex-Kaiser, which he openly expressed long after Germany had ceased to be a monarchy.

If one recognizes Hindenburg's sense of duty, his almost fanatical will to serve—to be a follower rather than a leader—there is nothing inconsistent in him. His fundamental attitude is, indeed, essentially a feudal one. The object towards which his feudal loyalty is directed may change from a Monarchy to a Republic, without altering his loyalty as such in the least. Another expression of his feudal outlook is his almost fanatical desire to follow some leader, to have a Kaiser or a Fatherland, whom he can serve unreservedly. This, too, is a characteristic which has not altered since his childhood.

A man like Hindenburg, who is essentially the follower type, is rarely confronted with harassing questions as to which action is right and which is wrong. He merely obeys his leader and this implicit obedience is in itself his moral code. He is not confronted with independent decisions which rack and furrow his personality. His imagination does not conjure up any new and original lines of action. A man who worships authority does not really need imagination. Hindenburg's gifts are, in fact, not imaginative or intellectual at all. His are talents of character: he has almost a genius for sincerity and loyalty.

Paul Ludwig Hans Anton von Beneckendorff und von Hindenburg—for that is the Field-Marshal's full name—comes from a long line of Prussian Junkers. Their one aim in life was to serve their feudal lords conscientiously. One of them, for instance, in the eighteenth century, served in an East Prussian garrison for twenty-five dreary years before there was any stir in his life. He then fought in Frederick the Great's two Silesian Wars, and lost a leg. When, in 1759, Frederick the Great conferred upon him the *Ordre pour le Mérite,* and presented him with two estates as a reward for his services, this Hindenburg wrote to his King: "I am unworthy of all the kindness and

graciousness which you, Lord, have shown to your vassal. I had nothing but a staff when I crossed the River Vistula, and now I have two estates. What am I, Lord, and what is my family, that you have caused us to rise in this way?"

The Beneckendorffs were first heard of in Prussian history as one of the feudal families who pledged their loyalty to the Teutonic Order in 1402, when the Emperor Sigismund sold the province of Neumark, a part of the electorate of Brandenburg, to the Church. The Teutonic Order, governed the Neumark until 1454, and some of the Beneckendorffs became Knights of the Order. Towards the end of the fifteenth century the Beneckendorffs' two estates, Limbsee and Neudeck, became a part of the electorate of Brandenburg, which at that time belonged to Frederick II, the second of the Hohenzollerns to govern this part of Prussia. Since that time the Beneckendorffs and von Hindenburgs have served the Hohenzollern family in some capacity or other. Most of them have been soldiers; a few, such as Hans von Beneckendorff, who was Chancellor of the Neumark early in the seventeenth century, have been Civil Servants. When, in 1701, Prussia became a kingdom, the Beneckendorffs, with the Hohenzollerns, became conscious Prussians. The name of von Hindenburg was added to the von Beneckendorff

by Royal consent in 1789, and since then the family have used both names.

Hindenburg is not a very satisfactory subject for the modern biographer, who snatches eagerly at every bit of information about his hero's parents and about the influences brought to bear upon him during the early years of his life. Search as one may, one can find no traces of an Œdipus or any other complex in Hindenburg's childhood. If he has complexes at all they are grandfather or great-grandfather complexes. His childhood was shaped according to the pattern of his distant ancestors. His grandparents and his own parents, under whose personal guidance he spent his early years, influenced him only in so far as they interpreted for him the traditions of his family. "It was not a matter of decision for me to become a soldier," Hindenburg writes in his Memoirs, "I became a soldier as a matter of course."

Hindenburg's grandfather, Otto Ludwig, like most of his other ancestors, began life as a soldier. Later on Ludwig retired from the army to manage the family estate at Neudeck. He married a Prussian Junker lady named Eleonora von Brederlow, of the house of Klaukendorf. They had fourteen children, and it was not always easy to make both ends meet. The Napoleonic Wars had been particularly devastating to the East Elbian provinces.

Otto Ludwig was able to keep the Neudeck estate in the family by marrying off one of his sons to the heiress of a neighboring estate. For many years Otto Ludwig was an active Civil Servant, being a County Councillor, and later on Chairman of the County Council at Marienwerder.

For his time Otto Ludwig was a very liberal-minded man. He permitted one of his daughters to marry a commoner, which for a German Junker was then an almost unheard-of thing. In theory Frederick the Great had permitted such marriages between his officers and the bourgeoisie, but in practice the Royal consent was rarely granted. "Instead of passing on to me such requests," Frederick the Great had once written to a Colonel who asked the King's permission for one of his young lieutenants to marry a physician's widow, "and showing an interest in this marriage, you should dissuade your officers in every way from choosing such alliances. Otherwise all of your officers will soon be bourgeois." Even one of Field-Marshal Hindenburg's most recent biographers comments on Otto Ludwig's broadmindedness. This biographer, as late as 1926, writes as follows: "The fact that Otto Ludwig married one of his daughters to a physician, the descendant of a Dutch bourgeois family, shows how liberal-minded and unprejudiced a man he was." Historians might say that Otto

Ludwig's broadmindedness was not disconnected with the rise of the bourgeoisie after the second Peace of Paris in 1815. But such an assumption would be pure theory. In practice it took far more than fifteen or twenty years for these new ideas, which were changing Europe, to penetrate the mind of a Prussian officer stationed in a small town in the province of Posen.

The Field-Marshal's grandfather lived until he himself was sixteen years old, so he knew him well. As a child Hindenburg spent every summer at Neudeck with his grandparents. His grandfather told him stories about the Napoleonic Wars and about the time when the French occupied Neudeck itself. There were no stories which thrilled young Hindenburg as much as war stories, especially if they were about battles in which his own family had taken part.

Probably the event which made the greatest impression on him during his childhood was his meeting with an old gardener who worked on his grandparents' estate. This old man had served for fourteen days in Frederick the Great's army. "The last ray of the sun of the great Frederician past fell upon me as a child," Hindenburg writes over seventy years later, about his meeting with this gardener.

Hindenburg's father, Robert, was Otto Ludwig's youngest son. He was born in 1816, just after the Prussian Wars of Liberation. He was educated at the *"Groebensche Stiftung,"* an endowed school for Prussian Junker boys at Königsberg. At the age of sixteen he became an officer in an infantry regiment stationed at Posen. Robert was such a serious and melancholy young man that it seems strange to learn that he was not a misfit in the army. Like all the Hindenburgs, however, he was a good and conscientious routine officer, although after thirty-one years of active service he attained only the rank of major.

Hindenburg's father, like his grandfather, married a physician's daughter, Louisa Schwickart, whom he met while he was a young officer in Posen.

Paul Ludwig Hans Anton, the eldest child of Robert and Louisa, was born on October 2nd, 1847. Then, as now, many Germans announced the birth of a son and heir through the press. The *Posener Zeitung,* at the time of Hindenburg's birth, included the following: "I wish respectfully to announce the successful confinement of my beloved wife Louisa, née Schwickart, this afternoon at 3 o'clock of a lively and healthy little son." This notice was signed "Beneckendorff von Hindenburg, Lieutenant und Adjutant."

On October 30th, 1914, when, as the victor of

Tannenberg, Hindenburg was made an honorary citizen of the city of Posen, the same paper expressed the hope that "this lively and healthy little son may for a long time remain a lively and healthy son of our East Elbian Province, and may be a cause of fear for our enemies and a blessing to the Fatherland." Since 1914 Posen has, of course, again become a Polish city.

Even during Hindenburg's infancy the Poles were considered by the Germans to be the traditional enemies of the province of Posen. During the Polish insurrection of 1848 there was constant street fighting in the city, and the regiment, which Hindenburg's father commanded, was one of those ordered to suppress the rebels. The Poles had a temporary triumph, and General Miroslawski, who occupied the city, ordered lights to be placed in the windows facing the streets in honor of the Polish victory. In his Memoirs Hindenburg writes that it was not possible for his mother to disobey this order. "She placed a light in the windows facing the street, but she retired to a back room of the house and, sitting at his (Hindenburg's) crib, took comfort in the thought that it was March 22nd, the Prince of Prussia's birthday, so that the lights in the windows of the front rooms were, in her heart, meant for her future King. Twenty-three years later," he continues, "the infant who had then

been in his crib stood in the Mirror Hall at Versailles and witnessed the coronation of William I, who had then been Crown Prince."

During Hindenburg's childhood his parents led a wandering life. His father was moved from garrison to garrison—Posen, Pinne, Cologne, Graudenz, Glogau, and Kottbus were the towns in which Hindenburg spent his childhood. The routine of garrison life was the same wherever the Hindenburgs lived. They were always within sight of the barracks and the parade ground. Hindenburg and his two brothers and sister were brought up to the sound of the shouting of commands and the marching of feet as their father's regiment performed the goose-step. The outside civilian world rarely penetrated into their military home. The narrow garrison life absorbed them completely.

Hindenburg's parents did not discuss the tremendous social upheaval which was going on in Germany during his childhood. In 1847, the year in which he was born, a hunger revolt in Berlin, known to history as the "potato revolution," had shocked the Frankfort Parliament into hoisting the black, red, and gold Republican flag for a day. It is doubtful whether Hindenburg, during his childhood, ever heard of this event, or whether even the Revolution of 1848 was discussed in his presence.

Like many pre-war German military men, Robert von Hindenburg probably thought that the influence of these distressing events—events which were so "disloyal" to his King and country—could be decreased if they were ignored. Hindenburg himself does not allude to them in his Memoirs.

In Pinne, which was more like a village than a city, he spent the happiest years of childhood. His parents lived in a house surrounded by a garden. A brook ran through it, and there was plenty of space in which the children could play. By a curious coincidence he again visited this house, which had been converted into a hospital, in 1914, after his first victories in East Prussia. This coincidence made a tremendous impression on him.

In 1863, when his father retired from the army to manage the family estate, the Hindenburgs moved to Neudeck, which the Field-Marshal even to-day considers his spiritual home, and on which he lavishes all the sentiment of the German for his native soil. "For me Neudeck is home; it is also the center of my own immediate family—the center to which my whole heart belongs. No matter into what part of the Fatherland my profession has taken me, I have always been faithful to my East Elbian province."

His devotion to Neudeck, which had been his grandparents' and great-grandparents' home, is

easy to understand if one has seen both the place and the man. There is nothing fanciful or extravagant about this old estate. The Hindenburgs' family home is not a picturesque castle or stately manor-house. It is, in fact, more like a simple farmhouse than a manor-house. Its somber and simple lines suggest hard work and early rising. There are many houses on other East Elbian estates which look very much like it. Everything about Neudeck is serious; there is no laughter or lightness in the air.

Even in his earliest childhood there was little playfulness or fun. The family discipline in his home was kindly, but none the less severe. The household was run on military lines. The family rules and regulations were as rigidly kept as the rules and regulations in the soldiers' and officers' quarters near by, where his father conscientiously disciplined his regiment. It was unheard of to be late for meals. When Hindenburg and his brothers were addressed by their elders they clicked their heels together and stood at attention, holding their hands tightly against their sides. They never questioned the authority of their parents, any more than, later in life, Hindenburg ever questioned the authority of his Emperor. His parents believed that, potentially, every little Prussian boy of their own class was an officer. If he learnt implicit

obedience as a child, he would know how to obey and to command when he fulfilled his destiny and became an officer in the Prussian army.

His brother Bernhard, who has written a biographical sketch of Hindenburg's childhood, recalls a nurse whom they had when they were children. She had once been a canteen woman attached to a Prussian regiment during the Napoleonic Wars. When the Field-Marshal, as a child of three or four, cried and shouted (as little boys, even if they are young Prussians and potential Prussian officers, are apt to do), this nurse would shout in a loud commanding voice: "Don't speak in the ranks."

Even now, if any one were to suggest to Hindenburg that his childhood had been harsh or even severe, he would no doubt be surprised. His worship of discipline, hard work, and a sense of duty made him glad that these instincts were instilled into him during his early childhood. To-day, in the private office of the President of the German Republic in the Wilhelmstrasse, a framed sheet of old yellow notepaper with "Ora et Labora" written on it stands on Hindenburg's desk. "Discipline and hard work within the Fatherland," he believes now as he did in his childhood, "are greater virtues than cosmopolitan fantasies."

As a child he took his studies quite as seriously as he did the command of the German army sixty

years later. His father taught him geography and history. A tutor named Kobelt, for whom he "retains a grateful memory," taught him reading, writing, and simple arithmetic. And his mother gave him "religious lessons," as they call Biblical instruction in Germany. Later, when his parents were stationed in the city of Glogau, he went to a boys' school (Gymnasium), but when he was eleven years old he was sent away to the Cadet School.

Young Hindenburg was always slow to learn: he was never quick to grasp a new idea. Unlike many other children, he was never inquisitive. He had little imagination and never wondered about anything. He never asked "why?" He accepted everything he was told and everything he saw or heard without question. The report from school which he brought home to his parents before the Easter recess in 1859 read as follows: "He is not as industrious as he used to be. His behavior, apart from a tendency to be too talkative, is good. His achievements in Religion, Latin, French and Geography are passable; in German he is good. Only in arithmetic he has not succeeded in reaching the passing grade."

He was chiefly interested in geography and history, but his historical interest was confined to the history of his own people, which, in his Memoirs,

he calls "the equivalent of devotional readings." "Despite my admiration for antiquity," he once wrote, "I find my heroes among my own compatriots. I must confess frankly and honestly that we should not be so one-sided and ungrateful as to overlook the men who have played an important part in our own Fatherland, because of any admiration we may feel for an Alcibiades or a Themistocles."

In Hindenburg's education the heroes of antiquity were, indeed, never placed above his own Prussian Electors or Kings. He was given no classical training. His entire education had one aim—to make him, one day, an efficient officer, and it was felt that Latin and Greek would not contribute towards this aim. As an old man Hindenburg is still grateful that he was not taught the classics. "The practical use of classical training," he writes in his Memoirs, "is not clear to me . . . the study of ancient languages consumes far too much time and energy. . . . I wish that instead of Latin and Greek these (German) schools would teach more modern languages, modern history, geography, and physical training."

His religious training was not confined to the Bible stories which his mother taught him. His attitude towards any and every subject was permeated by a deeply religious feeling. He has main-

tained his simple faith in the omnipotence of a Higher Power throughout his life. If, during the Great War, a battle was lost or won for the Germans, if many lives were lost or only a few, Hindenburg considered this Higher Power responsible. Perhaps all generals—unless they are geniuses like Frederick the Great—like to place the responsibility on a higher power. Hindenburg, at any rate, has remained grateful to his parents throughout his life for the religious training they gave him. He considers this love of God and the sense of complete devotion to his King the greatest gifts which they gave him. "My parents gave me the best thing that parents can give their children," he remembers gratefully as an old man, "a faith in God the Omnipotent, an unbounded love for the Fatherland, as well as a devotion to the individuals whom they considered the strongest support of the Fatherland: our Prussian Kings." Just as his implicit faith in God has never altered, so his attitude towards his Emperor and King has never really changed. He remembers the "honor and the happiness" it gave him when, as a child in the Cadet School, he was presented to his King. He recalls how, in the excitement of the moment, "it was not to be wondered at that many of the cadets were unable to speak." His attitude had not changed when, on his seventieth birthday, "his Majesty, his

Emperor, King and Master, was so very gracious as to be the first one to bring him his good wishes in his own home." "This visit," Hindenburg writes, "was the greatest consecration of the day."

CHAPTER II

THE CADET SCHOOL

IT is characteristic that Hindenburg begins his Memoirs with a description of his entry into the Cadet School at Wahlstatt. He felt that he did not really begin to live until he put on the "uniform of his King." He describes his early childhood quite casually after he has mentioned the day on which his father took him to Wahlstatt. Even at the time, when he was still a small child, it seemed to him that his real life only began when he became a cadet. He emphasized this attitude even as a boy of eleven, by making a complete break when he left home; he made a will and gave away most of the possessions which had been his during his short civilian life. In this will he gave away not only his toys and other concrete objects, but also certain privileges which he had enjoyed as the eldest son. His mother had, for instance, given him a bread roll every morning for a poor schoolfellow; in his will Hindenburg decided that his brother Otto was to be given the roll and to carry on this tradition.

"On an evening in the spring of 1859," Hindenburg begins his Memoirs, "as a boy of eleven years old, I said good-by to my father at the gate of the

Cadet School at Wahlstatt in Silesia. This was a farewell not only to my beloved father but at the same time to my entire early life. For this reason tears stole out of my eyes, and I saw them drop down on to my uniform. 'In this uniform one must not be weak and weep,' I thought; and I pulled myself out of my youthful suffering and joined my new comrades—not without a certain degree of nervousness."

The child Hindenburg may well have felt uneasy, for, judged by modern standards of education, the curriculum and system of discipline in the pre-war Prussian Cadet Schools was appalling. Even Hindenburg admits that life at Wahlstatt was "consciously and willfully brutal," but now, as then, he believed that this Spartan system of training was essential in the education of a future officer. "This type of education," he writes, "included a healthy development of the body and a steeling of the will. Will power and a sense of responsibility were considered just as important as knowledge. This type of education was not one-sided; on the contrary, it had a certain strength. It *was* possible for the individual to develop freely."

It is only natural that Hindenburg's attitude is a defensive one. Most Prussian generals, who belong to the old régime, are on the defensive at once

when Cadet Schools are mentioned, for, even before the German Revolution and the end of the Prussian military system in 1918, the training of Prussian cadets was bitterly attacked by many liberal-minded people in Germany.

For a sensitive child with even the slightest instinct to keep his own personality intact, life at Wahlstatt must have been devastating. There was nothing in Wahlstatt but work—and cruelty. From half-past five in the morning until nine at night life consisted of one round of polishing uniform buttons; saluting every instructor and every fellow-cadet who was a senior; miles and miles of goose-step; lessons in stuffy classroom and gymnastic exercises. There was not a moment of solitude in the classroom or parade-ground by day or in the dormitory by night. Discipline was maintained by horsewhips and humiliations. When the lads were permitted to leave the school grounds they marched two by two, cadets who had risen to the rank of non-commissioned officers keeping them in line with bludgeons. It was believed by the Prussian military caste that all these methods tended to make the boys more "manly."

There was one way to avoid punishments, and that was to subordinate oneself completely to the authority of the Institution. Hindenburg, no doubt, did not suffer as many of his companions

did, for as a cadet and as an officer he had a genius for subordination and a passion for authority. He never resisted irksome rules, he was always docile towards the older boys. It is probable that during his first years at Wahlstatt he was not bullied as much as some of the other children, for he never tried to assert his own personality nor antagonized the older boys. If he was told to polish the buttons on his dormitory prefect's uniform, even when his own needed polishing before inspection time, he obeyed dutifully without getting flustered. It did not irritate him, as it did boys who were more individualistic, never to be allowed to walk across the room without first standing to attention and asking permission from some older boy.

The bullying is almost beyond belief. None of the younger boys ever dared to report abuses they suffered, because the older boys were in a position to make their lives unbearable. One regulation, for instance, stipulated that the cadets must eat up everything that was on their plates. As a result, when the meat was tough (which was frequently the case), the younger boys at the table were forced to eat what the older ones had left.

"The Cavalryman" (Gardereiter) was for decades a popular game at the Wahlstatt Cadet School. A nib was stuck point upwards into a piece

of India-rubber, and the younger boys were forced to sit down on it. It was usual also for the older cadets to put stones inside snowballs and then hurl them at the younger boys. The victor in a boxing match was the cadet who made his opponent's nose bleed the hardest. The British words "fair play," which since the War have become so popular in Germany, had never been heard of at these institutions.

The authorities were aware of these conditions, but did nothing to improve them, as they believed that these "games" would help to develop the boys into "virile officers." A young German of the Junker class, who was too young during the Revolution of 1918 to know what it was about, but whose older brother had been brought up at Wahlstatt, once said: "We of the Junker class may have lost everything in the Revolution, but I, at least, have been saved from the Cadet School."

Ludwig von Wiese, the German sociologist, who was brought up at Wahlstatt forty years after Hindenburg had left, writes: "The strangest fact, as I look back upon my years at Wahlstatt, seems to me that during the many years of my residence there I can hardly recall one case of chivalry among the cadets. Courage, self-control, tenacity and a capacity to live simply were not infrequent, but if by chivalry is meant the will to protect the

weak I cannot in my own experience recall one single case."

Apart from brutality the Cadet School at Wahlstatt developed in the boys a deep mistrust as well as a contempt for any intellectual attainments or interests. A boy who did well at his studies—apart from military tactics or history—was looked upon with suspicion until he had proved in the gymnasium that he was strong and "manly." Civilian masters had no real status—that is to say, they had no power to inflict punishment—and as a result they were looked down upon by the boys as mere civilians. As Hindenburg was only interested in military subjects, he never awakened mistrust among his comrades by any undue interest in any other studies. "Since my days as a cadet," Hindenburg once said proudly, "I have never read a book that did not deal with military affairs."

In Wahlstatt and later at the Cadet School at Berlin, where he was sent when he was sixteen years old, his life was completely narrowed down to the army. The fact that Bismarck, in the early 'seventies, was already beginning to be a powerful influence, the fact that he was already promulgating Prussia's "divine" mission in Germany, were events of which the cadets were quite unconscious. Their job, as they saw it, was to learn to fight

against any enemy they were told to attack, and world events did not interest them.

Hindenburg defends the narrowness at Wahlstatt. He claims that the training preserved him and his fellow-students from losing contact with the world. Even now he never misses an opportunity of defending the pre-war Prussian Cadet Schools. In December, 1914, when he was already a Field-Marshal, he wrote to the commander of the Wahlstatt School: "If I have succeeded in my military career, I have always been conscious that my training in the Cadet School was the basis of this success. Enthusiasm for my future profession, love for my King and my Fatherland, as well as a fear of God, were instilled into me in my parents' home, and during my adolescence comradeship, self-control and manliness—as well as a scientific education—were given to me in the Cadet School. It is therefore not to be surprised at that as an old man I am grateful for the years I spent in the Cadet School, even though conditions then were probably more brutal than they are now. But even though they were brutal they developed characters and men who never lack initiative and a feeling of responsibility."

It is quite true that the hard life at Wahlstatt did seem to agree with young Hindenburg both physi-

cally and mentally. Because of various children's diseases, he had not been particularly strong as a small child. At Wahlstatt he was always healthy, and, strange as it may seem, usually happy. He also did much better in his studies than he had done at the civilian boys' school at Glogau. While he was a cadet he was a successful prefect of his dormitory, and a successful non-commissioned officer.

His one grief, when he was still at the school, was the fact that in 1864 he was too young to take part in the Prussian-Danish War. He felt it a disgrace not to be allowed to go and fight for his King and his country. "Three of my fellow-cadets," he wrote to his parents in 1864, "went into battle wearing our cadet uniform. One of them sent his clothes back to-day. The coat which he wore in the battle is now worn by a non-commissioned officer, so that we may always have this garment before our eyes." Hindenburg was never quite reconciled to the fact that, in 1864, a war was going on in which he did not take part. He still feels that he owes the world an apology because he stayed at home. "My youth," he writes as a very old man, "prevented me from belonging to the number of much-envied cadets who were allowed to take part in this war."

Hindenburg's attitude towards the Prussian-Danish War, when he was sixteen years old, was

fundamentally the same as his attitude towards the Great War in 1914. In 1864, as in 1914, he did not really bother about the international political situation. The complicated "Schleswig-Holstein Question" did not trouble his boyish brain. "We did not bother or conjure our brains about the political reasons which led to this war," he writes about the Danish War. As an officer Hindenburg did not consider it his business to know the causes of any war; his duty in 1864, as in 1914, was merely to obey and to fight whomsoever he was told to fight.

CHAPTER III

WAR WITH AUSTRIA

EARLY in 1866 Hindenburg, who was then eighteen years old, graduated from the Cadet School and became a regular officer in the Prussian army. He was given a commission in the Third Infantry Guard Regiment, which was stationed in Danzig. In the course of a few months, when the Prussian army was being mobilized for war with Austria, his regiment was transferred to Potsdam.

Lieutenant Hindenburg was completely absorbed in his new life. His battalion was his world, and he began to interpret national and international events in terms of the movements of his own particular regiment. When the Third Infantry Guards were moved to Potsdam, he began to realize that Prussia was on the verge of some international entanglement, but it is probable that he had no clear idea what it was all about. "We appreciated the necessity of a decision of power between Austria and us [Prussia]," he writes, "for, because of the alliances which bound the two countries together at that time, neither had sufficient freedom for action."

Bismarck had realized for several years that if

Prussia was to become the governing factor in Germany a trial of strength between her and Austria was inevitable. The Austro-Prussian alliance, formed just before the war of 1864, was not of long duration. The Schleswig-Holstein question provided as much cause for friction as Bismarck could have wished. Austria also chafed under a new Commercial Treaty which Prussia had signed with France. Though most of the smaller German States refused to sign this Treaty, Bismarck remained firm. Then, when Austria tried to push her claimant to the throne of the Schleswig-Holstein Duchies, it was Prussia's turn to be irritated. Austria was most displeased when the Prussian Parliament decided to create a Prussian naval base in Kiel. Diplomatic relations became very strained indeed. The war followed in a few months' time.

By the early summer of 1866 the "Seven Weeks' War," as it is called in German history books, was in full swing. Although Lieutenant Hindenburg had not followed the events which led up to it, he was thrilled at the thought that at last he could make some practical use of his military training. "It is high time," he wrote to his parents before leaving for the war with his regiment, "that a Hindenburg should smell gunpowder again . . . for a soldier, war is the normal state of affairs, and be-

sides I am in God's hands; if I should be killed, mine will have been the most honorable and the most beautiful death." Hindenburg learned with great satisfaction that his father, too, was going to take part in the war, even though it was only in the capacity of a Red Cross officer. Lieutenant Hindenburg wrote to his mother: "The separation from dear father will probably be very difficult for you, but you must remember that he has gone to perform a noble, chivalrous and Christian duty. What a marvelous relationship it is: the wound which the son must inflict may be healed by the father, and yet both are doing their duty."

The Battle of Soor, on June 28th, 1866, was his first experience under fire. He was a little disappointed because, as he recalls in his old age, "he did not experience very much." But, at least, he had the privilege of "smelling gunpowder," and of being on active service. In a letter to his parents he describes the emotions he felt during his first battle. "At first I felt a certain joy at the thought that I would learn to know the smell of gunpowder, but then I was filled with an anxious timidity lest I might not do my duty as a young soldier. At the sound of the first bullets one is overcome by a certain enthusiasm (the first bullets are always welcomed with 'Hurrah' by the troops). Then one says a short prayer, one thinks for a moment of

the dear ones at home as well as about one's old and honorable name, and then one dashes ahead."

During the battle Hindenburg thought about Frederick the Great's Victory at Soor and the fact that he was fighting on "Frederician ground." He was fighting in the same part of Silesia in which the "Great King's" army had moved on September 30th, 1747, during the first Silesian War.

Two days after the Battle of Soor young Lieutenant Hindenburg was abruptly torn away from his wild enthusiasm by routine jobs which taught him "the prosaic reality of petty military details." He was ordered to conduct thirty carloads of prisoners to the town of Trautenau. He returned to his regiment on July 2nd just in time to take part in the Battle of Koeniggraetz, the decisive Prussian victory in the Austrian War.

In this battle Hindenburg distinguished himself. While trying to storm one of the enemy's batteries with his platoon an Austrian bullet struck his helmet. He was flung to the ground and was unconscious for a moment. "When he jumped up again quickly," the official history of the Third Infantry Regiment reports, "three enemy guns were already in the hands of Lieutenant Hindenburg's men, while the enemy was trying to escape with two others, but these two guns, too, were captured by

his platoon." For his bravery Hindenburg was later rewarded with "The Order of the Red Eagle (Fourth Class) with Swords." Even to-day his old helmet, which had been pierced during the battle, is one of his favorite possessions, and he shows it with pride to his friends.

The sight of the killed and wounded, after the Battle of Koeniggraetz, was somewhat of a shock to him. "The actual excitement," he wrote to his parents, "comes after the battle is over, when one has time to see the horrors of war in their worst manifestation. I cannot describe these sights to you." As Hindenburg always considered this part of war as inevitable as war itself, he tried to avoid the thought of the killed and wounded, and to think of casualties in terms of glorious deaths for the Fatherland. Even in 1866, after his first sight of a battle-field the day after a battle, he does not dwell for long on the horrors of war. Instead he was filled with "thanks to God" for the victory, and with a "proud consciousness at having participated in a battle which added a new leaf of fame to the history of the Prussian army and to the Prussian Fatherland." He proudly remembered that his regiment had lost half of its men on the field of battle, "which was a proof that his regiment had done its duty."

When the war ended in the autumn of 1866

Hindenburg's regiment, with a large part of the Prussian army, made its triumphal entry into Berlin through the Brandenburg gate. The war was over. The Prussian army had been victorious. Hindenburg's particular regiment had done its duty. He had distinguished himself. That was enough. Hindenburg was happy.

He does not mention the Peace of Prague, according to which Austria was forced to consent to a closer union of the German States, in his Memoirs. Nor does he remark that the popularity of King William was really new-born and created largely by Bismarck, or that the King was not loved by the *Berliners* and by the world at large as much as he was by the army. All that Hindenburg records of the triumphal entry, apart from the general excitement, is the fact that the battalion to which his particular regiment was attached was lined up in Flora Square, and that an old lady among the crowd stepped out and handed him a pin when he was at loss how to attach his new medal to his uniform.

After the war the Third Infantry Guard Regiment was transferred to Hanover, where Hindenburg spent the next four years training recruits. His quiet and unblustering manner made him particularly successful with the men whom he commanded. He was just as popular in the officers'

mess, where he was never aggressive or in any way arrogant because of his success in the war. He was popular among the people in the town as well. This indicates that even then he was a man of tact, for it was not easy for a Prussian officer to be readily accepted by the society of a capital which had so recently been annexed by Prussia. His private life was integrity itself. He was never involved in any of the unsavory scandals so common among young officers of his generation. He did not expend his energy on interests outside of military affairs. "Hearty actions have precedence over any affectations of the intellect," he believed then as now. "Presence of mind and firmness of character are more important in military life than any refinement or training of mental processes." As a result of this attitude Hindenburg's superior officers in Hanover never found him wasting his time reading books or thinking unmilitary thoughts. He was always on the job.

In the summer of 1867 the King of Prussia visited Hanover for the first time. Hindenburg was rewarded for the conscientious and undivided attention to his job: his King took notice of him as he stood at attention when the regiment welcomed King William. "My military master," Hindenburg writes of this occasion, "made me happy by asking me where I had earned the Red Eagle Order

with Swords. . . . On later occasions it always made my heart beat fast with just as great a pride and just as great a joy as it did then when my King first asked me this question."

CHAPTER IV

WAR WITH FRANCE

WHILE Hindenburg was serving with his regiment in Hanover, Bismarck was busily planning a new German unity. A National Liberal Party was formed with the main object of uniting the North and South German States. This Party alone would, of course, have taken far longer than Bismarck's lifetime to attain this end. Liberal-minded people in South Germany hated the Prussian militaristic spirit. The South German States, as the home of German Roman Catholicism, were, furthermore, opposed to Prussia as a Protestant stronghold.

Bismarck was fully aware that it would take a very vital common interest to bring North and South Germany together. The Federal Customs Parliament (Zollverein), which met for the first time in Berlin in 1867, and to which the South German States sent representatives, did not contribute actively to German unity. This Parliament centered its interest almost exclusively in tariff questions and in facilitating trade among the various German States.

Then Napoleon III played into Bismarck's hands by demanding for France the left bank of

the Rhine as a "compensation" for the Treaty of Prague. France, of course, did not enjoy watching the rise of Prussia any more than she had enjoyed it at the time of the Seven Years' War.

The cause which finally brought about the war of 1870 was the Spanish Succession. France had been trying to gain the control of Spain for centuries. Then a Hohenzollern Prince became a candidate for the Spanish throne, and the withdrawal of his candidature was demanded by the French Ambassador in Berlin. The refusal to withdraw him by the Prussian Foreign Office, followed by Bismarck's famous "Ems Telegram," finally brought about the war.

When the war broke out Hindenburg was acting as adjutant of the first battalion of his regiment. The threat of war filled him with an extreme ecstasy of joy, and in common with his fellow-officers he was impatient to get to the front at once. "The beginning of the war," he writes, "was a painful disappointment to my regiment and to the entire *Garde du Corps,* because after marching for weeks we had not reached the enemy's lines." On the famous 17th of August, 1870, when the small section of the German army commanded by Prince Frederick was confronted by five French army corps at Vionville-Mars-la-Tour, Hindenburg's regiment finally reached the scene of battle.

When his regiment was on the march Hindenburg dashed off to visit the grave of his cousin, another Paul von Beneckendorff von Hindenburg, who had fallen a few days before. "He wanted," one of Hindenburg's romantic biographers writes, "to gather a few flowers on the blood-drenched battlefield [on which his cousin had fallen] to send home, but everything had been trampled down and made unclean."

In the Battle of Gravelotte and Saint-Privat, which occurred on August 18th, Hindenburg again had an opportunity to distinguish himself. He was in good form for the battle. "One's feelings begin to lighten," he writes about the eve of the fight, "one's heart again beats more strongly and happily."

When Hindenburg's regiment was closing in on Saint-Privat there was a possibility of surrounding the village. The first German attack was beaten back, and thousands of dead and wounded were left lying on the battle-field. There was a danger that some of the enemy were in the neighboring village of Roncourt. Hindenburg rode out to investigate and found that the enemy was actually there. For this deed of bravery he received the Iron Cross (Second Class).

The Germans advanced on Roncourt, but the French withdrew, so that the village was taken

almost without a fight. The attack on Saint-Privat could now begin afresh.

The advance was concentric. It was not until the foremost Germans were about a thousand paces from the village that they actually saw the enemy. They were at once received with a hail of bullets, but without at first replying to the French fire, they pushed forward and, at the point of the bayonet, took a wall which was about 300 paces from the nearest houses.

They then closed in on the other sides of the village also. The French, seeing their own danger, made desperate sallies, but were always beaten back by terrific German volleys. German artillery came up and opened an intense fire. Houses and walls collapsed under the bombardment, and columns of flame and smoke rose from the ruins.

The order to take Saint-Privat by storm was given. Just as the sun was setting the drums and bugles sounded the charge. Led by their officers, and with regimental flags waving, the Germans advanced at the double, different units reaching the northern, western, and southern parts of the burning village simultaneously.

In the gathering darkness a fierce hand-to-hand encounter developed in the streets and houses. There was firing in the nearer distance, but right in the village itself there was little sound save the

yells of men who were pierced by bayonets, the crashing of rifle-butts on French or German skulls, and the groans of the wounded.

The French, who fought with extreme courage, were hemmed in more and more closely. Little by little their resistance was broken, and those who were trapped in the houses began to lay down their arms. French officers would sometimes hand their swords through the windows to the Germans in token of surrender. About two thousand unwounded French prisoners were taken.

What is known as the Battle of Saint-Privat-Gravelotte decided the defeat of the whole French right wing. It had been a sanguinary encounter. The German losses in killed and wounded were about twenty thousand.

Hindenburg's elation over the victory, and the feeling that he had done his duty bravely, was not unlike the joy Wagner must have felt when he heard his *Tristan* for the first time. "It was an incredibly moving moment," Hindenburg writes, "when, whilst the evening sun was sinking, our front line moved forward to the final victory. It was not the command which drove them on, but rather a spiritual impulse, an iron determination for success, and a sacred will to fight. . . . However the military tactics of the Battle of Saint-Privat may be criticized, this battle cannot lose

thereby its innate grandeur. The greatness of this battle is based on the spirit with which the troops fought during the hours of terrible crisis, and the spirit which made them victorious in the end." Hindenburg had remained completely calm during the battle. "I do not myself understand," he wrote in a letter on August 19th, 1870, "how I could have remained so cold-blooded. I looked at my watch frequently (during the battle) and made pencil-notes at the moment concerning the strategy of the battle."

Hindenburg was not as disturbed or moved by the dead and wounded after the Battle of Saint-Privat as he had been by his first sight of a battle-field after Soor, although in his Memoirs he expresses deep regret concerning the heavy losses. "What a large number of the best and most irreplaceable men fell into their graves," he writes, "what a magnificent spirit our people must have to put up such a fight."

Hindenburg's regiment did not take part in the Battle of Sedan. He and his men were situated on a hill from whence they could watch the fight. As he watched "the German lines gradually enclosing the unhappy adversary" he was filled with satisfaction, and "never, either before or after, did he spend a night in a battle-field with a feeling of equal satisfaction" as he did at Sedan, after the German

victory. The occasion was all the more festive because after the battle the Crown Prince of Prussia visited the troops and told them that Napoleon III had been taken a prisoner. "The unparalleled rejoicing," Hindenburg remembers, "with which our monarch was received can hardly be imagined. . . . He thanked us with tears in his eyes for our achievements at Saint-Privat." Bismarck was accompanied by the Crown Prince, and Hindenburg saw him face to face. Bismarck's significance in relation to the war and its battles did not seem to strike Hindenburg. He was always literal-minded in his appreciation of the personalties he met. "Bismarck rode in Olympian repose after the cavalcade," is all that Hindenburg has to say about this meeting, "but he was recognized, and accepted the cheering of the troops with a smile."

After Sedan Hindenburg's regiment was among the troops ordered to encircle the city, and to force what was left of the French army to take refuge behind the fortress, so that they would no longer be able to attack the Germans. As adjutant of his regiment it was Hindenburg's duty to inform the Colonel of this order from headquarters. As he rode along the road he was told by a French army doctor whom he met that, had he come sooner, he would have seen the carriage, surrounded by Black Hussars, which was taking Napoleon III to Bel-

gium. "Had I passed only two minutes sooner," Hindenburg writes, "I should have witnessed this historic incident."

In his Memoirs Hindenburg records his first sight of Paris. It was on September 19th that the gilded spires of the Dôme des Invalides and the other churches sparkled in the distance "under the morning sun." "I think," he writes, "that the Crusaders must have been filled with the same sentiments when they gazed on Jerusalem." Hindenburg's regiment was on active duty near Paris during the entire siege, which lasted for several months. Later, when the city had capitulated, Hindenburg, who was always popular, was elected by his regiment to represent them at the proclamation of the German Emperor at Versailles. As he stood in the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace his attention was centered around his "most gracious King and Master, whose quiet and simple dignity gave the celebration a greater solemnity than any outward ceremonial."

He enjoyed Paris, but he never forgot that he was a Prussian. "I have never admired the cosmopolitan spirit," he writes, "but I have never been prejudiced against other nations. Despite all their strange characteristics, I also appreciate the good sides of their characters. For me the French people are too lively and changeable, but I think that the

élan which comes to life in these people during the most difficult times is commendable." The outstanding event of his stay in Paris was the celebration of "his Emperor's" birthday on March 22nd. The rise and fall of the Paris Commune, which Hindenburg witnessed, was unimportant, in his opinion, as compared with the Emperor's birthday.

CHAPTER V

"MILITARY PEACE WORK"

HINDENBURG'S "military peace work," as the Germans call the activities of the army when there is no war, lasted for forty years. From 1871, when the Franco-Prussian War ended, until 1911, when he retired from the army, he patiently drilled his regiments, taught military tactics at the War Academy, or compiled military statistics at the Ministry of War. "Ora et Labora" continued to be his *Leitmotif* throughout these long years. He advanced slowly, step by step, from a Captain to a Major, from a Major to a Lieutenant-Colonel, and finally to Lieutenant-General. His promotions were all granted largely because he reached the age when not to have been promoted was to have been insulted. He was never promoted because of any outstanding service. Even Niemann, his enthusiastic biographer, admits that his services to the Fatherland during these four decades "were valuable, though not decisive." Hindenburg was merely a part, and a rather insignificant part, of the Empire's new army, which was organized and developed during the Wilhelmian era. "He was a link in a mighty organism," writes Niemann, whose metaphors are often somewhat confused, "and as

such he was permitted to add many a valuable stone to the development of this organism. Many thousands of human beings, officers and men, passed through Hindenburg's creative hands. He is among many who tilled a wide field; in common with many others he was a conscientious and extraordinarily careful planter of seeds. But there is nothing of the Prometheus in him, and under the conditions in which he works and has his influence it would not be possible for anything Promethean to appear."

During the years of his "military peace work" Hindenburg was stationed in many cities of the new German Empire—Hanover, Berlin, Stettin, Königsberg, Fraustadt, Oldenburg, Coblence, Karlsruhe and Magdeburg. He met and knew his fellow-countrymen in all sections of the Reich, and loved them all, because they were Germans. "During the many years of my service," he writes, "I learned to know almost all of the German 'tribes.' I believe, therefore, that I am in a position to judge the wealth of valuable characteristics which are at the disposal of our people, and I believe that there is hardly any other country in the world which offers in variety so many conditions necessary for such rich intellectual and spiritual life."

Despite the fact that Hindenburg lived in so many parts of Germany, and became familiar with

so many "tribes" of Germans, his immediate associates were always officers and his garrison life everywhere was fundamentally the same. The monotony of this life seems very depressing to an outsider. Hindenburg always met the same class of people; Prussian officers and their wives; the same conversations were repeated again and again at the mess table of his regiment. Throughout these forty years his life was based on one tradition: subservience to his Emperor, and loyalty to the army. Though he repeats again and again that he had no interests outside the army, and that he considered reading books a waste of time, it is quite obvious that he was never bored. He was quite satisfied with the excitement he derived from witnessing the unveiling of monuments; from banquets celebrating his comrades' anniversaries of five, ten, or twenty years of military service; and from his first or second or third meetings with Royal Princes. The outstanding event of these years was his meeting with his Crown Prince and his Emperor. His chief relaxation, year in and year out, was hunting, a sport of which even now as an old man he is still passionately fond.

The great annual events during his years of "military peace work" were the spring and autumn maneuvers which the Emperor himself attended.

These maneuvers, in Hindenburg's mind, were almost as serious and as wonderful as real wars.

The conversations of Hindenburg's fellow-officers were centered entirely on the army and on army gossip: who was promoted and why; who was transferred and why. One anecdote which Hindenburg tells in his Memoirs is indicative of these officers' ideas of humor. "To celebrate the Emperor's birthday," Hindenburg writes, "the Generals and Staff Officers of the General Staff were the guests of the Field-Marshal (Moltke). Once on such an occasion one of the gentlemen present calculated that Moltke's toast to the Kaiser, including the exordium and the first 'Hoch,' would not be more than ten words long. A bet was made, and I was to be the judge. The gentleman betting against the possibility of the ten words lost the bet, for the Field-Marshal only said: 'Gentlemen, Hoch the Kaiser!' (Meine Herren, der Kaiser Hoch!), words which in our circle and from Moltke's mouth were quite sufficient. The next years the same bet was to be made, but this time the other party was the winner, for General von Moltke said: 'Gentlemen, Hoch to His Majesty the Kaiser and the King' (Meine Herren, seine Majestät der Kaiser und König er lebe Hoch). These are eleven words."

Though Hindenburg devotes only fifteen pages

of the four hundred pages of his Memoirs to these forty years, he considers this incident charming and witty enough to be included. Apart from the "gayety" apparent from this anecdote, many hours in the officers' mess were occupied with the exchange of reminiscences of the wars of 1866 and 1870.

Hindenburg and his comrades never pretended to be interested in any subject not directly concerned with military affairs. Once, when he was commanding the garrison at Oldenburg, he was asked to attend a meeting of the local literary society and to discuss the *"Niebelungenlied"* with its members. He answered by saying that, as a military man, he had not had time to study literature, and that therefore he could not judge the interest or the importance of the *"Niebelungenlied."* Hindenburg did not attend the meeting. It must have taken courage, as a German, even though he was a soldier, to admit that he did not appreciate the greatest German epic, but, as always, he was as courageous as he was sincere when he declined the society's invitation. He was quite obviously satisfied, for forty years, with his war memories and his daily rehearsals for the next war, in which he never expected to participate, for, long before he retired in 1911, he had given up all hope of active service in another war.

During the first few years after the Franco-Prussian War Hindenburg was busy even from a civilian, or rather from an academic point of view. Immediately after the war he began preparing for his entrance examination into the War Academy. The candidates were the pick of the regiments. Apart from the purely military examination, they required a recommendation from their Commander in Charge, as well as an examination in "general culture" (Allgemeine Bildung).

Hindenburg passed all these requirements and was admitted as a student of the War Academy in 1873. At first he was disappointed with the courses of study offered by the Academy. He considered any subjects not immediately concerned with practical military problems as a waste of time. "The first year," he writes, "did not come up to my expectations. Instead of being offered courses in war history and modern tactics, we were put off with the ancient war history and out-of-date tactics—that is to say, we were offered courses of secondary importance. Apart from which we were forced to study mathematics, which only a few of us were to use later as land surveyors."

During the last two years of his studies, however, Hindenburg was more satisfied, especially as he began to find friends in Berlin. It was customary for a young officer of his standing and family to

associate with the family of some Prince, and Hindenburg, who always lived up to every tradition and convention of his class, "had the honor to belong to the intimate circle of His Royal Highness Prince Alexander of Prussia." It was in Prince Alexander's house that he met Field-Marshal von Moltke for the first time. Naturally his hero-worship for Moltke was not quite as exalted as his admiration for his Kaiser, but he was nevertheless tremendously impressed by the great Field-Marshal. "In 1891," Hindenburg writes, "I saw the Field-Marshal for the last time, and that was on his death-bed. I was permitted to come into his presence on the morning after his death. The deceased lay there without his usual wig, so that the wonderful shape of his head was fully visible. A laurel wreath around his temples was all that was needed to complete the picture of an ideal Cæsar's head. How many tremendous thoughts had had their being in that head! What a high idealism had dwelt within it! What a nobility of attitude, begun within that head, had worked for the welfare of the Fatherland and for its ruler!"

After graduating from the War Academy in 1877, Hindenburg spent a few years with his old regiment in Hanover. Then, in 1878, when he was thirty-one years old, he was transferred to Stettin

as a captain attached to the General Staff. As the youngest officer on the Staff he was given a great deal of detail work to do. He liked it, and did it well. "My position as the youngest General Staff officer," he writes, "naturally caused me to be given detail work. At first this was disappointing, but I began to love this kind of work, for I realized its importance in the execution of great ideas and in the welfare of the troops. Only during the annual journeys of the General Staff, when I was an aide-de-camp, did I have an opportunity of occupying myself with larger affairs."

While in Stettin Hindenburg decided to marry. Niemann probably expresses the attitude of Hindenburg and his kind towards marriage and domestic life as well as any one could: "In his life of work," Niemann writes, "Hindenburg began increasingly to feel the need for a peaceful domestic life, for the affection of a woman who would take care of him, for the kind of family life he had known at his parents' home, and which, as he had been obliged to leave when he was only eleven years old, he had learned to cherish all the more. Hindenburg's spirit (Gemüt), in all of its German depth, demanded his right, and as he is a traditional type, the thought of future generations filled him as well."

Hindenburg himself mentions his marriage far

more casually in his Memoirs. After discussing the Russian General Skobelof in one paragraph of the Memoirs, he passes on with no obvious connection to his wife. "I must not leave the fact unmentioned," he writes, "that I was married in Stettin. My wife is a soldier's child too. She is the daughter of General von Sperling, who was with the Sixth Army Corps in 1866, and who was the Chief of Staff with the First Army in the wars of 1870-71, and who died shortly after the Franco-Prussian War. I found in my wife a loving mate who faithfully and untiringly shared joy and sorrow, care and work, and thus became my best friend and comrade. She gave me one son and two daughters. The former did his duty in the Great War as a General Staff Officer. Both of my daughters are married; their husbands, too, stood before the enemy in the last war." Hindenburg's brother Bernhard bears out the Field-Marshal's high praise of his wife. Bernhard von Hindenburg writes of her: "As far as was in her power she knew how to keep anything away from him which might have disturbed or bothered him in the performance of his military duties."

Hindenburg's chief object, as far as the education of his children (especially his son) was concerned, was to instill in them a devotion to their Kaiser and their Fatherland as complete as his own.

He recalls how he stood one day on the Linden in front of the famous corner window from which the Old Emperor, William I, always nodded and smiled to the populace in the streets below. "Carried away by my enthusiasm," Hindenburg writes, "I lifted up my five-year-old son so that he could see our venerable Master, and I said to my son: 'Never in all your life forget this moment, and then you will always do right.'" This was, indeed, Hindenburg's main educational idea: if his children were loyal to their Kaiser, they could do no wrong.

In 1881 he was transferred to Königsberg in East Prussia, where for the first time he seriously studied the problems concerned with Germany's Eastern front. In Königsberg General Verdy du Vernois, who was later German Minister of War, was Hindenburg's commander.

From Königsberg he was transferred to Fraustadt in Posen, where he continued his interest in the Eastern front and where he came into close contact with the Poles. "Except for a few expressions he did not speak Polish, which was somewhat of a difficulty, as many of the men in his regiment were of Polish origin and spoke no German." At that time he was not anti-Polish, but since the Great War, and since Poland has regained such large sections of the province of Posen, Hinden-

burg, as a loyal German, feels that in his earlier years he must have been mistaken about the Poles. "At that time," he writes, "I believed that the frequent thefts and the prevalence of drunkenness among the Poles was caused more by insufficient discipline in their youth than by any innate moral defect. I extremely regret that I must change my mind about the Poles in Posen, now that I have heard of the atrocities which the insurgents committed on defenseless people. I would not have thought that the fellow-countrymen of my former soldiers could have done these things."

In 1885 Hindenburg became a major in the General Staff, and in 1889, when his former commander, General du Vernois, became Minister of War, he was transferred to the War Ministry in Berlin. He was put in charge of a Department on General War Administration (Allgemeine Kreigsdepartement). He was not particularly happy at the War Ministry, but he "did appreciate the benefit which he derived later from his four years of research and study." He welcomed it, however, when in 1893 he was again assigned to his regiment in Oldenburg, for he considered that the position as regimental commander is the finest position in the army. After that his promotions occurred automatically as he advanced in years. In 1896 he became Chief of the General Staff of the Eighth

Army Corps in Coblence, and in 1900 he became the Commander of the 28th Division in Karlsruhe. In 1908 he became a Commander-General. He was in charge of the fort at Magdeburg until his retirement in 1911.

The actual reason for his retirement in 1911 has never been fully explained. Many people in Germany believe that in the maneuvers of 1908 Hindenburg made the fatal mistake of letting the Army Corps commanded by the Emperor lose the meneuvers. Naturally the Emperor William would not accept such a defeat from any of his Generals, even if it was an accident. Hindenburg, who is always loyal to the ex-Kaiser even if his own reputation is involved, writes as follows about his retirement into private life: "The decision to leave the army matured within me gradually. I had attained far more in my military career than I had ever dared to hope. There was no war in sight, and so I recognized it as my duty to make room for younger officers. For this reason I asked to be retired in 1911. As a false legend has arisen around the unimportant fact of my retirement, I should like expressly to declare that no professional or personal friction caused me to take this step."

CHAPTER VI

TANNENBERG

DURING his retirement Hindenburg did not ignore international politics altogether. In his Memoirs he gives the results of his reflections. Germany, so he concluded, was spreading too far afield in world affairs, but was not strong enough in Europe. What he calls "high tides of French jingoism" threatened her with regular repetition. Their "origin was known." They "sought and found support in Russia and in England, no matter who, or what, in these countries, fathered the open or secret, conscious or unconscious, driving springs." Indeed, all kinds of dark forces were at work, not only "high tides" of known and yet mysterious origin, not only the equally mysterious "driving springs," but also a "hostile policy" that mobilized "foreign rapacities" against the Fatherland. And then there were Germany's exposed frontiers, and some rather "unreliable populations," presumably Poles and Alsatians, in the frontier regions.

Germany herself was heedless of all these dangers, that, though mysterious, were yet so clear to the retired General. She neglected the realities of the situation, and did not think of her own selfish

needs. She thought only of honor. Her allies, the Austrians and Hungarians, could not be persuaded to increase their armaments so as to meet the "immense numerical superiority of our prospective foe," Russia. As for Italy, the inferiority of her armies had become apparent to German students of war in the Tripoli campaign. Nor could there be any reliance upon Italy as an ally. The old General felt uneasy. He did not want war; not that he feared it—"I did not fear war"—but he realized that although war had "elevating effects," its "irruptions" into "human existence" were "devastating," so that he wished war to be postponed "as long as was thinkable."

But an understanding with France was "hopeless," the "envy and rivalry" of England could not be averted, Russian "rapacity" could not be satisfied without a breach of faith with Austria. Thus war had to come. "Anxiety was indeed great, but confidence was greater."

It was, of course, galling and perhaps humiliating for the old soldier to be out of it. "I submitted to my fate," he writes, "but nevertheless I remained in yearning anticipation." Perhaps he hoped that his chance would come. His services might be needed at home, or even at some base. No doubt his fighting days were over, but there were a hun-

dred other ways in which useful employment might be found for him.

At three o'clock on August 22nd, 1914, he received a telegram from the Kaiser, who was at General Headquarters in Coblence. The telegram asked if he were ready for immediate service. He wired back: "Am ready." We do not know what he expected and what he hoped for at this, the most decisive moment of his life, but he could not have foreseen what was to follow. He could not, even by the utmost effort of his imagination, have visualized, however dimly, the world-shaking events that would lift him to an eminence compared with which even that of General was a humble office—an eminence that—most inconceivable of all—would one day place him above William Hohenzollern himself.

Within a few weeks he was the most renowned of all German leaders, a national hero and a national myth. A legend was born, to become the foundation of his whole subsequent career. Without it he would never have been elected President of the German Republic; indeed, it would never have even occurred to any one to suggest his candidature.

To the German people the War presented itself in a very simple manner, very much, indeed, as it did to Hindenburg himself. Germany was sur-

rounded by enemies who for years had been plotting her destruction. They attacked suddenly and in concert. She had no alternative except to fight for her very existence. The French were swept back by her first thrust, but the Russians, with millions upon millions pressing on behind, invaded her sacred soil. The hateful and dreaded Cossack was once more pillaging, ravishing, and destroying amongst German towns, villages, and farms. A semi-Oriental flood had broken into her Eastern defenses, threatening to engulf her capital, driving before it men, women and children, with what little they had saved from their wrecked and burning homesteads. But a mighty champion, like Achilles in his tent, was waiting for the hour of his own and his country's destiny. His Kaiser called, and he answered: "Am ready." He went eastward, and gathering the German forces, who were fighting heroically but desperately against prodigious odds, infused into them and the whole nation his own heroic will, and with strategic generalship unparalleled since Hannibal overthrew the Romans at Cannae, lured savage invaders amongst the lakes and swamps of East Prussia, and then flung his army against them like a thunderbolt, driving them into the marshy waters, where they perished miserably, the broken, panic-stricken remnants fleeing back across the frontier hotly pursued by the vic-

torious Germans. The Battle of Tannenberg had been won. Germany had been freed from the invader. It is as the liberator of East Prussia, as the hero of Tannenberg, that von Hindenburg became legendary, and so he has remained.

This is the legend. What of the reality?

For many years, indeed even before the war of 1870, the Germans had reckoned with a war on two fronts, the Western and the Eastern. The victor of 1870, General von Moltke, a man of high political as well as military intelligence, did not believe that in such a war the French armies could be swiftly and totally defeated. He held that Germany would have to act on the defensive, although delivering powerful offensive thrusts from her defensive positions. He also counted on the coöperation of the military and political leaders, and expected the Government to exploit the effect of every successful offensive by political action. To him an energetic and resourceful diplomacy was as important as energetic and resourceful strategy.

Towards the year 1880 von Moltke modified his own ideas. He was for a defensive in the West, but for an offensive in the East—an offensive that should be exploited to conclude a separate peace with Russia, leaving the whole German army free to intimidate France, and perhaps to end the war

without a big Western campaign. Germany's Western front was suited for defensive operations, all the more so, because, if hard pressed, he could withdraw her armies upon the Rhine, where their position would be almost impregnable.

Along the Belgian frontier her defenses were weak. But if the French advanced through Belgium, Germany would have a great political advantage. In any case, on this part of the front also there was the Rhine to fall back upon. Germany's Eastern frontiers were open, but with her superior railway system she could deliver rapid, crushing blows against the slow-advancing and equally slow-retreating Russians.

But von Moltke's ideas were gradually supplanted by those of Count Schlieffen, who became the accepted master of German strategy. The situation had also changed in so far as the efficiency both of the French and the Russians had improved. Both Powers developed their strategic railways (the Russians with the help of money lent to them by the French), and year by year the nightmare of huge French and Russian masses converging simultaneously upon the German army became an obsession to the German General Staff. Count Schlieffen's plan was to hold the Eastern front with only weak forces, abandoning the whole East Prussian salient to the Russians if necessary, while sweep-

ing forward with almost the entire German army against the French, defeating them decisively in one great shattering onslaught, and then turning against the Russians. The French might remain on the defensive so as to give the slower Russian attack time to develop and gather its full momentum. In that case the Germans, according to the Schlieffen plan, would have to advance through Belgium so as to deploy rapidly for the culminating decisive battle.

Both Schlieffen and von Moltke had reckoned with the possibility that England might intervene on the French side. If she did, then one of three things was likely: the British army might land on the Jutland coast. It would cause a diversion, but it could be quickly disposed of by a relatively small German force. Or it might land in Belgium, where it could also be disposed of. Or it might attach itself to the French left flank, where it would not cause any change in the general German dispositions. England was formidable because of her immense reserves that would tell in the course of slow time, but she was not considered to be a very great immediate danger. The German fleet could operate offensively against the British at once. If it won a victory, then England might be fatally injured. If it were destroyed, then the chief cause of British intervention would be removed and Eng-

land would not be an obstacle to peace negotiations with the defeated French.

That the Germans could have held their Western front against the French is—in the light of what happened in 1914—as certain as anything in war is certain. That they could not only have defeated the Russians, as indeed they did in 1914, but also have pursued them and broken them up on Russian soil, is equally certain. And without the violation of Belgian neutrality, and a purely defensive attitude towards France, both on land and on the sea, Great Britain would perhaps not have declared war, or, at least, not so soon as she did. It is therefore conceivable that if Germany had followed the ideas of von Moltke instead of von Schlieffen, she might have been victorious. But she might also have been victorious if she had kept to the Schlieffen plan more faithfully than she did.

But there was one thing on which both these masters of strategy were agreed—German soil might have to be abandoned to the enemy. Nothing mattered compared with the decisive battle which, wherever it was fought, would decide the War. Von Moltke was even prepared to fight this battle east of the Rhine. Von Schlieffen reckoned with a Russian occupation of all East Prussia, and even with a French invasion of Southern Germany. Such sacrifices, he knew, might be necessary for the

sake of the one decisive battle. And he knew that no battle could be decisive in East Prussia and Southern Germany, but only in Northern France.

The German Commander-in-Chief when the War began, the younger von Moltke, was a refined, sensitive, and modest man. He had little confidence in himself, and accepted his command with resignation, resolved to do his best, but with little belief that his best would be good enough. He adopted the Schlieffen plan, but watered it down. He was nervous about the Russian threat in East Prussia and the French threat in Southern Germany. His main thrust went through Belgium into Northern France, but in South Germany he felt he could "hold or beat the French." He beat them, but by doing so he turned them back on their railheads and main lines of communication, whence they could rapidly be shifted northward to be thrown against the Germans in the "decisive battle." When the Russians had advanced into East Prussia, though not as far as might have been expected, he sent reënforcements eastward, withdrawing them from the West, where they might have been used against the French in the "decisive battle."

The German General Staff insisted that the advance through Belgium was a matter of life and death. The Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg,

agreed to the violation of Belgian neutrality because he believed what the General Staff told him. But the General Staff seems to have had no idea of the political or even of the military consequences. It never understood the meaning of sea-power. It thought only in terms of land warfare, never in terms of politics or naval warfare. That politics, propaganda, and blockade might be instruments of deadly warfare, just as much as infantry, cavalry, and artillery, was never realized in Germany until it was too late. The political leaders might have made up for the mental limitations of the military leaders, but the whole German system gave the military leaders a fatal preponderance, and not until irrevocable defeat destroyed their power and prestige did the political leaders begin to come into their own. This preponderance of the military was one of the reasons why Germany went to war, it was one of the reasons why she failed to exploit her victories and come to terms with her enemies, and it is therefore one of the reasons for her total defeat.

The invasion of Belgium brought England into the War, and after England, Italy, for had England remained neutral Italy would have remained neutral also.

Nevertheless to all appearances all went well for Germany at first, except for the fearful slaughter. The German public heard of victory after victory.

Hindenburg wrote of the first three weeks of sanguinary warfare that "nothing happened to make worrying thoughts seem justified." The Schlieffen plan, as carried out by the German General Staff, appeared to be working with the precision of a machine. The first big engagements in Northern France had not, it is true, been decisive, for the French ran away too fast to be caught and destroyed. Still, they were being pursued, and they would either have to accept the "decisive battle" or surrender Paris and half of France; while England would be menaced in a deadly manner once the Germans held the Channel ports.

But things were not quite perfect, for East Prussia had been invaded. This was entirely in accordance with the Schlieffen plan, for the Russian invasion could not be decisive for a long time to come. But refugees streamed in from the East, and the German public felt that there was something monstrous and outrageous in the desecration of German soil, and also feared the Russians might reach Berlin, although that menace was very remote indeed.

The Russian invading armies had general orders to spare the civilian population as far as possible. But, like the Germans in Belgium, they were nervous and frightened. The mere suspicion that noncombatants had been firing at them would be followed by the arrest of German officials, mayors,

or other prominent persons who would either be deported or kept as hostages. The Russians executed a number of civilians in East Prussia on very little evidence, and they completely destroyed several villages and townships because they believed that civilians had been firing from the houses. A German mansion would look more like a pigsty than a human dwelling-place after Russians had used it as a billet. But, generally speaking, the Russian excesses in East Prussia were not exceptionally monstrous according to war-time standards. They were not comparable with the systematic atrocities committed by the Germans at Dinant and other Belgian towns. Nor did the Russians deport men and women to work in gangs as the Germans did in Belgium and Northern France.

The Russian excesses, such as they were, and the dangers and destruction of the fighting started a panic amongst the German inhabitants. Household goods were packed into carts; farms, cottages, and homesteads were abandoned. Old men, women and children, and cattle thronged the roads and streamed westwards. During the Battle of Gumbinnen there was a general halt—a German victory would allow the fugitives to return to their homes. But the Germans lost the battle, their troops had to fall back, and the refugees resumed their trek, choking the roads and seriously hampering the

movements of the troops and supply columns. Some of the refugees trekked as far as Berlin. They numbered about half a million in all.

To the German public the East Prussian campaign was one for the liberation of the homeland from barbaric hordes, from pillage, murder, incendiarism, from ruin, hunger and destitution. That the Russian menace to Germany in 1914 was far smaller than the German menace to France, that the Battle of Tannenberg was of minor importance, the Battle of the Marne all important, was at the time understood by very few.

It has often been said and written that the German High Command yielded to the popular clamor for the expulsion of the invaders. But for this there is no evidence. It is more likely that the Russians were believed to be more formidable than had been anticipated, that their invasion of East Prussia was looked upon as a strategic danger, and that to throw them back was considered necessary not only to save the left flank of the eastern armies, but also to relieve the pressure on the right flank which was being held with great difficulty by the Austrians and Hungarians.

Thus, contrary to the advice both of the elder von Moltke and of von Schlieffen, the Germans were conducting three offensives all at once: in East Prussia, in South-west Germany, and in

Northern France. They won the two strategically non-decisive campaigns, but they lost the "great decisive battle" in Northern France and so lost the War. The Russians were fully aware of their own true purpose, which was not so much to win victories in the East as to weaken the Germans in the West, so that the all-decisive battle should not be lost by the French. The Germans, by sending reënforcements eastwards, contributed to the fulfillment of this purpose. The German public was unduly impressed by the expulsion of the invader, and by a number of victorious engagements. It never realized that it was possible to win every battle and to lose a campaign, or to lose every battle and win a campaign.

These illusions were fostered and perhaps shared by the German High Command. They were all the more disastrous when, in the end, final defeat was at hand, for the consternation of the German people was all the more shattering and demoralizing after so many brilliant victories had been won.

There were conversations between the French and Russian General Staffs in 1901, 1911, and 1913. The plan of campaign agreed upon was modified each time, but one thing remained unaltered; namely, the assumption that the Russian advance would be subordinate to the French, and

that its main purpose was to keep as many German troops engaged in the East as possible. If the French were defeated, then the Russians, even if themselves defeated, could gradually make their huge numbers tell, and by engaging ever bigger German armies, allow the French time to recover.

But at the conference in the year 1913, when France was represented by General Joffre and Russia by General Jilinski (who until March, 1914, was the Russian Chief of Staff, and from then until September, 1914, Commander-in-Chief of the Russian North-west front), it was agreed that the French would advance with 1,300,000 men on the eleventh day of mobilization, and the Russians with 8,000,000 as soon after the fifteenth day as possible.

The Russians ordered general mobilization on July 31st, the French on August 1st. Germany declared war against Russia on August 1st, and presented her ultimatum to Belgium on the 2nd; on the 3rd she declared war against France. On the same day Italy declared her own neutrality. On the 4th Great Britain declared war against Germany, and Germany against Belgium. On August 6th Austria-Hungary declared war against Russia.

The situation was extremely favorable to the Allies. Italy had dropped out of the Triple Alliance—this was not unexpected, nevertheless it was

a source of anxiety to the Central Powers, who could not be sure that Italy would remain neutral. The French coast was secured by the British Fleet, and there was a small but formidable British force on the French left flank. In 1901 France and Russia could not have counted on British support. They might have reckoned with it, but could not have been sure of it in 1911 or in 1913, or even in 1914, if the Germans had not marched through Belgium.

The Allies were thus in great superiority over the Germans. But the Germans had certain advantages. They had interior lines, and, as compared with the Russians, their railways, roads, and rolling-stock were excellent.

East Prussia formed a deep salient into Russian territory, and therefore favored a Russian concentric advance, but it was also well adapted to defense: the River Deime, east of Königsberg, was deep and had marshy banks. There were heights all along the western shores. The whole area round Königsberg was well fortified. The town itself was a fortress so strong that it could not be taken except by heavy artillery, which the Russians could not have brought up for weeks to come. Had the Russians advanced, the fortress would have menaced their right flank, all the more so as the German navy commanded the Baltic Sea, so that

Königsberg, even if assaulted, could be supplied with reënforcements, food and war material.

There was a wide gap near the town of Insterburg, but a strong position could be taken by the Germans along the River Angerapp with its high banks and marshy shores. The right flank of their position abutted on the Masurian Lakes, big stretches of deep water with swampy shores and surrounded by forests. The gaps between them were strongly fortified.

From the southern spur of this system of lakes eastward back along the frontier there was another system of lakes, smaller, and with larger gaps, but nevertheless excellent as natural defenses, and made almost impregnable by field works.

The Germans, with their excellent roads and railways, had far greater mobility than the Russians. They could strike out with alternating offensives like piston strokes. They could use the Masurian Lakes as a kind of screen, and push forward east, north or south of them, without letting the Russians know which it was going to be, for in those days there was hardly any aerial reconnoissance.

On the Russian side there were few natural positions. Great stretches of territory were forest or wilderness, with wretched roads and few human habitations. It had been Russian policy to leave

whole districts wild and barren, so that, should there be an invasion, it would be difficult for the enemy to live on the land and push forward. This policy told against the Russians now. It made their advance slow, and the provisioning of their troops difficult, for the commissariat was badly organized. They had several strategic railway lines, but no close network of railways as the Germans had.

In accordance with the Schlieffen plan the East Prussian front was lightly held—by what Hindenburg in his Memoirs calls a "thin center"—"thin but not weak, for they are men with hearts of steel and wills of steel, and behind them are their homes, their wives and children, their parents, their brothers and sisters, their goods and chattels!"

The Germans on the East Prussian front were under the command of General von Prittwitz. The Russians on their front outnumbered them by at least two to one, although the initial contingents were only about half of the eight millions originally planned. Their Chief of Staff was General Yanushkevitch. Their First and Second Armies, that is to say the force advancing on East Prussia, were commanded by General Jilinski. The Commander of the First, or Northern army, was General Rennenkampf; the Commander of the Second was General Samsonoff.

Rennenkampf's army, advancing due west, was to engage the Germans, while Samsonoff's, advancing in a north-westerly direction, was to outflank the German right and attack it in the rear.

The Russian time-table went all wrong. Samsonoff's army was to engage the German right and deliver the decisive blow two days after Rennenkampf's army had begun to attack. But to do this it had to undertake forced marches that exhausted the troops, and left the commissariat far behind.

The prowess of the Russian cavalry, or rather of the Cossack, had been a legend ever since the Napoleonic Wars. They were dreaded as a semi-Asiatic savage horde, of great daring, extreme mobility, and astounding horsemanship. On the East Prussian front they vastly outnumbered the German cavalry. As a matter of fact they proved to be almost useless. They raided German territory before the main Russian invasion began, but their reconnoitering was extremely bad. They withdrew whenever they met even small German infantry detachments. Indeed, throughout the whole campaign they were hardly ever where they were most needed, and towards the end they were demoralized and defeated, not by any German blows, but by utter exhaustion after weeks of irresolute wandering hither and thither. Whenever they encountered German cavalry their inferiority became

quite evident. Only towards the end, on September 11th, did they do good work in protecting the menaced Russian right flank. But so great was the hatred and fear they inspired that they themselves were in danger of special retaliation if they were captured. Von Hindenburg writes in his Memoirs that the Germans felt kindly towards their Russian prisoners, but "only against the Cossacks was there general anger. They were regarded as the perpetrators of all the brutalities under which East Prussian people and soil had to suffer so cruelly. The Cossack evidently had a bad conscience, for whenever he was in danger of being taken prisoner he seized every opportunity of removing his regimental signs, namely the broad stripes on his trousers."

Rennenkampf's army began its advance on August 17th. There was great dislocation between its divisions. A large gap was left between the Third and the Fourth Corps. This gap was discovered by the Germans, who slipped through it and attacked the Russian rear, inflicting heavy losses, taking about 3,000 prisoners, throwing part of the Russian center back on the frontier in disorder, and slipping out again without heavy losses of their own.

The Commander of the First German Army Corps, which faced the center of the Russian

army, was General von François, a man of exceptional daring and independence. He often went beyond his instructions, even to the point of disobedience, whenever there was a chance of inflicting a reverse upon the Russians. Whenever he took the chance he did so with success, and without disrupting the German plan as a whole. Indeed, to him, more perhaps than to any other German commander, is due most of the credit for the whole German victory in East Prussia.

After the first set-back, the Russians resumed their advance. Progress was slow, there was great confusion, and their rear services were badly disorganized. Reconnoissance was very defective. The Russian orders were vaguely worded, and divisional commanders were often at a loss as to what they were expected to do. The Germans picked up the Russian wireless messages, and knew all their plans in advance. Sometimes it was as though the Russians were groping irresolutely in the dark, the Germans moving resolutely in the light.

The Germans did not want to fight further eastward. Their plan was to destroy Rennenkampf's army, not merely to push it back, so they retired on Gumbinnen before the slowly advancing mass. On the 20th the Russians came to a halt, so as to give their exhausted, dispirited men a rest,

and their rear services time to come up. They believed that the Germans were in retreat through fear of being crushed.

Von Prittwitz did not want to engage the Russians just yet, but von François insisted that the main attack should begin at once, and he had his way. The German light and heavy artillery on the left flank opened fire. The Russians were taken completely by surprise. The German cavalry also moved in the direction of the gun-fire. They never missed a chance of going into action. But in the center the German attack was delayed by a few hours. The Russians were thus able to prepare for it and they drove the Germans back with heavy losses.

This was the Battle of Gumbinnen. It was a German reverse, for it did not destroy or even disorganize the First Russian Army, or even push it back, although by their superior capacity for rapid concentration the Germans, in this battle, faced the Russians in superior numbers. Thus it was evident that the fighting quality of the Russian infantryman was really of a very high order, and it was only when badly led and badly fed that he seemed inferior to the German.

For the Germans it was a very anxious time. They could hardly have foreseen that the Russians would not follow up their strategic success. The

Russian cavalry, 14,000 sabers strong, with 48 guns, did not attempt pursuit. They seemed to disappear whenever there was fighting to be done. Their commander, Khan Hussein Nakhichevansky, was later on relieved of his command.

Meanwhile Samsonoff's army was slowly moving forward. Von Prittwitz, overruling the arguments of some of his officers, particularly von François and von Hoffmann, decided on a general withdrawal behind the Vistula.

Samsonoff's army had been marching sixteen or seventeen miles a day for nearly a week, so as to reach the German frontier on the prearranged date, August 19th. The weather was very hot, the sandy roads extremely bad. There was no advance guard, and therefore no advance requisitioning. The army had to live on the land, because the rear services had been unable to keep up. The country behind the advance was almost barren of resources. Some of the units had marched ten or twelve hours a day for eleven days, and all this before fighting had begun. Coördination with Rennenkampf was so defective that the gap between the two armies grew wider and wider.

At the time when the German commander feared that Samsonoff's army would advance with crushing force unless the Germans withdrew behind the

Vistula, that army was as good as defeated without ever having fought.

The reconnoissance of the Russians was bad as usual. They blundered into German detachments, and were sharply repulsed. At one spot a false alarm was raised, there was a panic, in which the Russian infantry and artillery got mixed up, and scores of infantrymen were killed by the limbers and ammunition wagons. Panics were not, however, confined to the Russian side. There were several German panics that gave the German Command great concern.

Strategically the Russians were in an overwhelmingly powerful position, but the heat, exhaustion, starvation, and muddle had robbed them of their power. The Germans had overrated them greatly. The order for retreat to the Vistula need not have been given. That it was given was not, in the circumstances, unreasonable. The Germans could not have been fully aware of the appalling condition of the Russian army. Nevertheless, as it gradually came to be known, and as the situation of the German forces appeared more favorable than it had at first been supposed, and as General von Prittwitz persisted in his pessimism in the talks he had by telephone with Supreme Headquarters at Coblence, it was decided to relieve him of his command.

General von Moltke wrote to Major-General Ludendorff, who had distinguished himself both by personal bravery and resourcefulness in the attack on the fortress of Liège, appointing him Chief of Staff of the German Eighth Army in East Prussia:

"A new and difficult task is entrusted to you," so ran the letter which Ludendorff received at nine o'clock on the morning of August 22nd, "more difficult even than the storming of Liège. . . . I do not know any one in whom I have more confidence than in yourself. Perhaps you will still save the situation in the East." This letter seems to show that von Moltke considered the situation to be a very grave one indeed. He proposed General von Hindenburg as Commander-in-Chief of the Eighth Army to replace von Prittwitz. At noon on the 22nd the Kaiser confirmed both appointments. Ludendorff reported at Supreme Headquarters that same afternoon. Hindenburg, living in retirement at Hanover, got the telegram to which he replied: "Am ready."

Meanwhile there was better news from the East. The order to withdraw had not reached the First German cavalry division. While getting into touch with the main body, from which it had strayed, it found the Russians inactive, and captured 500 of them. Nowhere did they press forward, and it

soon became known that their left flank did not extend so far westward as had been believed, that is to say, the danger of being outflanked had been overrated.

Von Prittwitz, therefore, before he received orders to hand over, revised his own impressions, and instead of developing the withdrawal planned an offensive against Samsonoff's army. It is quite possible that the decision to suspend him was unnecessary. But the order to hand over came before he could carry out his new dispositions, though after he had made them.

Ludendorff agreed upon a plan of operations with the Supreme Command at Coblence. He then entrained for the East. The train stopped at Hanover on the evening of the 22nd. He met Hindenburg, whom he had never seen before, on the platform. Hindenburg had only just been clad in his new "field-gray" uniform. He boarded the train with Ludendorff, who in half an hour explained his plan. Thereupon they both went to bed.

The plan—and indeed, all the subsequent maneuvers in East Prussia—were conceived by Ludendorff. In his Memoirs he always writes: "I proposed this or that maneuver," and Hindenburg says nothing to the contrary. Ludendorff was the real commander of the Eighth Army. Hindenburg seems to have accepted everything he suggested.

It is not obvious why Hindenburg was appointed at all. Perhaps he was meant to be a steadying conservative influence upon the much younger and possibly headstrong Ludendorff. As a matter of fact Ludendorff was not at all headstrong. But he was not easy to get on with. His rather narrow nature reveals itself in his own Memoirs. He takes all the credit he can for himself, and grudges it to any one else. Hindenburg was free from pettiness. No doubt he helped to make the personal relations between Ludendorff and his officers much smoother than they would have been without him. He is frank and generous in recognizing Ludendorff's preponderance. "I have often," he writes in his Memoirs, "described my relations with Ludendorff as a happy marriage. How can the outsider definitely differentiate the achievements of the one or the other in such a marriage? We met in our thoughts as in our actions, and the words of the one were often only the expression and thoughts and feelings of the other. I regarded it as one of my highest duties, as soon as I had recognized the great merit of General Ludendorff, to leave a clear path, or if necessary to clear the way, for the intelligent thoughts (geistvolle Gedankengänge) of my Chief, for his almost superhuman capacity for work, and his untiring industry."

When Hindenburg and Ludendorff arrived at

Marienbad in East Prussia they were received very coldly by von Prittwitz's Staff (von Prittwitz himself had already left). They also found that this Staff had developed his plans for an attack on Samsonoff's army in such a way that the orders about to be given by Hindenburg and Ludendorff had already been given by the Staff Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel von Hoffmann.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff assumed joint control on the 23rd. Hindenburg issued an Order that read: "We will trust one another and do our duty together." The plan, conceived by von Prittwitz, developed by von Hoffmann, conceived independently by Ludendorff, and carried out under Hindenburg's and Ludendorff's command, was to reëngage Rennenkampf with light forces, so as to prevent him from going to Samsonoff's help, and then to attack Samsonoff with all the forces available.

The attack on Rennenkampf began at once. The Russians were again surprised, because of their wretched reconnoissance. They were also starving, so that they really had "no stomach for the fight." They began to retreat.

An immediate attack on Samsonoff was difficult, because the Germans lacked artillery and ammunition on this front, and three or four days would be needed to make good the deficiency. Even the

dashing von François hesitated, but he was persuaded by Hindenburg, who had been asked to do so by Ludendorff. The order for attack was issued on the evening of the 25th. It was signed "Hindenburg, Commander-in-Chief."

The battle, afterwards to be renowned as the Battle of Tannenberg, opened on the morning of the 26th. The fighting on the first day was rather desultory. As usual the reconnoissance of the Russians had failed. They suspected no more than light German forces on their left, and advanced to attack them. On the 27th, the German supply of guns and ammunition being considered adequate, the Germans began a terrific bombardment. The Russians, though strongly entrenched, broke beneath this fire and began to abandon their positions even before the German infantry could come up. They were demoralized so soon chiefly because they were hungry. The Russian left flank was held by the First Corps. It had received an order from General Samsonoff "to protect the rear of the army" on the left flank "at all costs." Samsonoff therefore realized the importance of the battle. But the Corps was smashed up by the German onslaught. General von François went beyond Ludendorff's orders, pushed his offensive home, and outflanked the Russians. His disobedience was one of the chief causes of the great Ger-

man victory, for it ensured the subsequent envelopment of the whole of Samsonoff's army.

Two Russian battalions still held the town of Allenstein. Two more were sent to help them get out. But all four were cut off by the Germans, and driven up against Lake Wulping, where they surrendered. This may be the origin of the popular belief that the Russian armies were drowned in the Lakes.

The Russian right flank was also being broken. Only the center, under General Martos, held. Indeed, it surprised the Germans by its resistance. But with both flanks giving way, and the left flank threatened with annihilation by the German envelopment, the center could not hold.

On August 31st General Jilinski recognized the total defeat of Samsonoff's army. He ordered its broken remnants to withdraw behind the Nareff. General Samsonoff himself was missing. His body was found later in a forest. He had committed suicide.

The Russians did not greatly outnumber the Germans in this battle. They were far superior in machine-guns, but inferior in artillery. The Russian losses were about ten times the German. In fact, the Russians lost—in killed, wounded, and prisoners—the majority of their men engaged. Major-General Sir Edward Ironside, one of the

best authorities on the East Prussian campaign, writes that "the disaster of Tannenberg was the greatest defeat suffered by any of the combatants during the War."

It is difficult to explain why Rennenkampf did not hasten to Samsonoff's help. Indeed, no explanation seems to have been offered, other than confusion, muddle-headedness and incompetence. Rennenkampf's army had settled down to passive defense without any serious attempt to find out what the Germans would do next. Even before the Battle of Tannenberg was over the Germans had begun to disengage some of their troops and send them northwards to join a new concentration against Rennenkampf. Two fresh corps had arrived from the West.

The Russians were forming a new Tenth Army and re-forming the broken remnants of the retired Second, which had been Samsonoff's. Jilinski was planning a new concentric attack, although the Tenth Army was still embryonic, and the Second consisted of only a few demoralized remnants. Only the First Army—Rennenkampf's—was in fair shape and strength.

The Germans anticipated the Russian offensive many days beforehand. The general advance of the Russians was to begin on September 14th, but

von Hindenburg gave the order to advance against them on the 3rd. The main German thrust was delivered by General von François, who drove the enemy back in disorder from their strong positions among the Masurian Lakes. He then totally destroyed the Russian left flank, and so exposed the whole of the First Army to destruction. This was on September 9th.

On the Western front the Germans had pursued the retreating French and British victoriously, and yet in a vain effort to bring about the "decisive battle." It was with satisfaction that they realized that the French were making a stand on the Marne, and so inviting final, irrevocable defeat. As the front was being prolonged towards the sea, both sides trying to outflank each other, the Germans needed every man they could get to save their lines from becoming precariously thin.

But by August 25th the French had been so badly beaten that the Germans felt that it was possible to spare some men for the Eastern front. Two corps were sent eastwards on August 25th and a third was kept in readiness at Thionville. Owing to congestion on the railways the two corps did not entrain until the 27th. But by that time the situation in the East was clearly not so bad as had been supposed, whereas in the West the Germans, though continuing to advance, still

seemed as far off as ever from the "decisive battle." Von Moltke therefore cancelled the order for the entraining of the Third Corps. But the other two had already proceeded eastward. By the time they arrived the Battle of Tannenberg had been won. By the time the Third Corps could take part in the fighting on the Western front the Battle of the Marne had been lost.

Thus at the supreme crisis of the whole War—that is to say, when the "decisive battle" was being fought, and when the Germans, according to von Schlieffen's teaching, needed every available man in Northern France—three army corps were either inactive or engaged in relatively useless work. But other forces that might have been on the Marne were also lacking. Two corps had remained behind to mask the fortresses of Antwerp and Maubeuge. In the South, after the victory in Lorraine, two German armies under Prince Rupert of Bavaria spent themselves in vain attacks on the immovable wall of French fortresses, whereas they could have sent divisions northward to reënforce the German right flank in the "decisive battle."

Even so the Battle of the Marne was developing favorably for the Germans, and there is no clear explanation why von Moltke ordered the withdrawal. It seems that, by nature pessimistic and lacking self-confidence, he was oppressed by his

own responsibility, and fearing that the German army might be outflanked, and so not only defeated but also destroyed, took what seemed the safer course and ordered a general retreat on rear positions. No doubt, despite their successful engagements all along the line, the German situation was precarious. But the presence of the corps and divisions that were lacking at that critical moment would have made a big difference. The Germans were stronger than Schlieffen would have sanctioned both on the South German front and on the East Prussian front. They were all the weaker on the all-important Western front.

In 1915 von Moltke wrote of the despatch of the two army corps from the West to the East: "I admit that this was a mistake, for which retribution came on the Marne." It was on the Marne that the entire German strategical plan collapsed. The "decisive battle" had been fought and lost, and the sacrifice of three army corps contributed nothing to the winning of the Battle of Tannenberg, for the sake of which it had been made. The War after this became one of slow attrition, in which the British blockade and the unlimited reserves of the Allied and Associated Powers told with ever-growing effect until the German Empire was totally and irrevocably defeated.

Thus the Russians, though terribly beaten in

East Prussia, fulfilled their chief purpose, which was to weaken the Germans in the West so as to give the French the decisive victory.

On September 9th, the day of the Battle of the Marne, the Germans in the East attacked along the Insterburg gap. They were heavily repulsed, the Russian infantryman again showing his quality. Nor did the German offensive make much progress anywhere after von François' initial success.

The Russians even made some formidable attacks while carrying out a slow withdrawal. The Germans were alarmed and became extremely cautious, but the withdrawal of the Russians was impeded by congestion of the roads. Their men were hungry, thirsty and exhausted (the weather was still very hot). Their cavalry was too fatigued even to maneuver; there were acute divisions of opinion in their command. Rennenkampf quarrelled with Jilinski, and Jilinski with Supreme Headquarters. The Germans soon realized the calamitous condition of the enemy and pushed forward. The Russians could never hope for anything more than bare escape. In this they were successful, for all German attempts at envelopment were eluded. By September 14th they had disengaged themselves, glad to have avoided another Tannenberg. There were acid recriminations at Headquarters. Rennenkampf relieved his

Chief of Staff, Mileant, of his command. There was an agitation for the dismissal of Rennenkampf himself, but to this Supreme Headquarters would not agree. General Jilinski was superseded by General Russki, who had been successful against the Austrians and Hungarians. The Russian Generalissimo, Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch, wired to the Tsar: "I frankly admit that I have not understood how to get my orders carried out. I therefore lay my guilty head at Your Majesty's feet."

The Russians had been totally beaten by far inferior numbers, and driven out of German territory in little more than a fortnight. Their total losses in a month's campaigning in East Prussia alone were over 350,000 men and about 500 guns. As many Russians were killed, wounded, or taken prisoners as there were German soldiers both at the front and in the rear in East Prussia. In other words, every single German on an average had killed, wounded or captured a Russian. The total German losses were about 37,000 men.

It was natural that a victory so prodigious should be greeted with jubilation by the German people, and that they should not see its relative insignificance. The popular hero of the campaign was Hindenburg. It would have been won even if he had never been born. It might not have been won

if von François had never been born. But Hindenburg was formally in command and formally responsible. It was he who signed some of the most important of the German army orders. It was he who announced the German victories to the Kaiser and to the German people. His name, far more than Ludendorff's, was constantly before the public eyes. The legend had grown in less than a fortnight. It never perished; perhaps it never will. It was the foundation of his future greatness.

CHAPTER VII

THE RUSSIAN STEAM ROLLER

THE Battle of the Marne transferred the initiative in the West from the Germans to the Allies, who moved their troops northwards so as to outflank the Germans. The Germans were compelled to respond by a concentration on their own right. This concentration should have been carried out a fortnight earlier for the offensive which was to have culminated in the "decisive battle." It was, however, carried out under pressure from the enemy as a defensive necessity.

General von Moltke had been relieved of his command. His successor, General von Falkenhayn, did not only abandon the idea of an offensive that would change the whole situation in the West, for which German troops were being shifted from the left wing to the right, but he made an attempt to break through the French front between Verdun and Toul. This attempt failed.

But the Allies also failed in their efforts to exploit their victory on the Marne. Indeed, in several parts of the front, German counter-attacks compelled them to pass from the offensive to the defensive, and the "race to the sea," that is to say, the

rapid lengthening of the Allied left and the German right, was lost by the Allies.

Meanwhile the Austro-Hungarian armies had been badly defeated by the Russians. They retreated as far back as the ridge of the Carpathians, suffering heavy losses and a great deal of demoralization. They had also been defeated in Serbia—there, where they had opened the offensive that began the Great War, they were now back on the defensive.

Germany had become, in the words of one of the ablest of her generals, von Kuhl, Chief of Staff of the First Army on the Western front, "a beleaguered fortress," and her "battles were the sorties of the garrison to delay the progress of the siege." Von Falkenhayn also believed that it was so. In his book *Die Oberste Heeresleitung in ihren wichtigsten Entscheidungen* 1914-1916, he pointed out that the British plan of winning the War by hunger and attrition was beginning to take effect, and that the German Admiralty did not think that this plan could be defeated by a naval offensive. All that Germany could, in his opinion, hope to do, was to hold out longer than her enemies. His general plan was to deliver "limited offensives" that would injure and weaken the enemy more than they would weaken and injure the Germans.

But these "limited offensives" were very costly in

life and material. Some of them were not strictly "limited." The one which von Falkenhayn delivered in the region of Ypres was ambitious in the sense that he contemplated a break through that would destroy the whole of the British army and give Germany possession of the French Channel ports from which she could threaten England with her submarines, and once more begin the "open warfare" of which the Germans were the acknowledged masters. But the attempt failed. It was in this offensive that half-trained German troops went into action led by student officers, with a fanatical heroism that called forth the admiration of the British Command.

For the Germans it was a defeat with slaughter of a particularly horrifying kind. It ended their hope of breaking the rigidity of the Western front. It also showed how costly and exhausting any offensive, limited or not, must be.

The Austrians were barely holding their own in their strong rearward position. Had the Russians been able to take the Carpathian heights, debouch from the passes on to the Hungarian plain, and threaten Budapest, the dual monarchy, already shaken by defeat, might abandon its alliance and sue for a separate peace. The Germans would then face the Russians, French and British in complete

isolation. The Austrians asked for help, and help had to be given.

Hindenburg was for carrying the East Prussian campaign into Russian territory, by pursuing the Russian defeated army and destroying it altogether. But Falkenhayn doubted whether decisive operations such as Hindenburg—and with him Ludendorff—had in mind were possible. Hindenburg thought that the Russian army could be brought to battle on the River Nareff. He insisted that, whatever happened, the German armies must remain independent of the Austrians.

Falkenhayn did not accept Hindenburg's view, partly for military reasons, but also for "political" reasons. Joint operations with the Austrians were to begin, the independence of the German contingents being preserved as Hindenburg had requested. These contingents were the greater part of the German army in East Prussia. Four and a half corps of this, the Eighth Army, were ordered to entrain for Upper Silesia, where a new "Ninth Army" was to be formed.

It was to move forward and strengthen the Austrian right in the region of Cracow. Ludendorff was appointed Chief of Staff on September 9th. On the 17th Hindenburg was appointed Commander-in-Chief. Thus the coöperation between

the two Generals, which had worked so well in East Prussia, was to be continued.

It may have been humiliating to Hindenburg to be placed under the command of von Falkenhayn, who was for many years his junior, and had far less war experience. But whether humiliated or not, he never uttered a word of complaint. In such matters he was always perfectly loyal.

In the month of October the plight of the Austrians became so desperate that their Commander-in-Chief, Conrad von Hötzendorff, made an urgent appeal that strong German reënforcements—at least thirty divisions—should be transferred from the Western to the Eastern front.

Von Falkenhayn now had to choose. Were his "limited offensives" to operate uniformly on all fronts? Or was the main German effort, even if limited, to be made on one front only?

He himself was a decided "Westerner," while Hindenburg and Ludendorff were "Easterners," at least in this stage of the War. Falkenhayn's chief preoccupation in the month of October was the fighting round Ypres, which was still undecided when Conrad made his appeal. Falkenhayn, still hoping that the resistance of the British army would be broken, wished to continue the struggle for the Channel ports, and felt unable to spare troops for the Eastern front.

It was more and more evident that England was becoming Germany's most formidable enemy. She was also the most hated, and this hatred had some influence on German military dispositions. Falkenhayn wrote on November 18th: "Our most dangerous enemy is not the one in the East, but England, by whom the plot against Germany stands or falls." Hindenburg, in his Memoirs, also reveals a certain preoccupation with ideas that were not strictly military. "The Western decision," he writes, "was traditional." And in the West there was not only France, "whose jingo agitation (Hetzereien) never allowed us to rest in peace of mind," but also England, "the opponent who, we were all of us convinced, represented the force that was making for the destruction of Germany."

Lieutenant-General Moser, in his *Kurzer strategischer Ueberblick über den Weltkrieg,* wrote that the German High Command lacked a guiding idea at the end of 1914. An offensive against the British would have been such an idea, and would also have been immensely popular in Germany. "War to the knife with England"—this slogan would have kindled every heart.

Towards the Russians the Germans had a certain tenderness, and they always hoped that there might be a separate peace in the East. But their Russian policy was full of contradictions. Some-

times they were for an annihilating campaign, and sometimes for leaving the Russians alone as much as possible.

Even towards the British, German strategy was ambiguous, whatever German emotions might have been. The naval offensive, which the elder von Moltke, or Count Schlieffen would probably have advised, even at the risk of losing the entire German fleet, was not undertaken because of the hope that, were peace to come, the German navy would be a useful pawn in the negotiations. There was also a school of German military thought, represented by General von der Goltz, that believed in an attack on the communications of the British Empire. But there was no great enthusiasm for it amongst the majority of German military leaders, and the first attack on the Suez Canal was made by a swarm of Arabs, too scantily supplied with German arms.

In his Memoirs, Hindenburg is contemptuous of "political" reasons for military dispositions, but these reasons, which Falkenhayn gave without stating them in detail when he ordered Hindenburg and Ludendorff to support the Austrians, were weighty.

True, the attitude of Rumania was uncertain, so was Bulgaria's. Further Austrian defeats would probably bring both these Powers into the War

against the dual monarchy. Bulgaria's attitude would also depend on the outcome of the Serbian campaign. Italy was giving the Germans a good deal of anxiety—not that she was considered a very formidable enemy, but the Austrians were already so badly shaken that it would have been a great strain upon them to hold another front. But it became more and more evident that the defeat of the Dual Monarchy presented such opportunities of spoliation and aggrandizement to Bulgaria, Rumania and Italy, that these Powers would certainly seize them if the defeat of Austria became irremediable. The political reasons for helping Austria were therefore very sound. Hindenburg's contempt for politicians was later on to be even more disastrous. Indeed, it is probable that if he and Ludendorff had been less contemptuous of politics Germany might not have lost the War.

Hindenburg left East Prussia for Upper Silesia on September 8th by motor-lorry. In his Memoirs he recalls the reflections that accompanied him on the two days' journey. The country through which he passed was largely Polish, but had been "colonized" by German settlers. "These Germans," Hindenburg reflected, "were a simple, dutifully-minded people." It seemed to him "as though Kant's doctrine of the categorical imperative had not only been preached here, but had been under-

stood with special seriousness, and translated into the world of reality and toil. Such and such-like grave musings," he continues, "were with me during this journey, and never left me. Germans, gird yourselves not only with the mighty golden band of ethical duty towards mankind, but also with the steel band of equally high duty towards your country! Make this steel band ever stronger until it becomes a wall of bronze, under the protection of which you are living—and there is no other that can protect you amid the surf of the European world. Believe me, this surf will last! No human voice will banish it! No human treaty will weaken it! Woe to us if the surf finds a piece of the wall broken off!"

Hindenburg's Memoirs are written in a peculiar German. The sentiment is sometimes a little uncouth, and expressed in metaphors that are strained and often mixed. His dispatches and memoranda on military strategy are clearly and simply worded. Indeed, the contrast between their style and the style of his Memoirs would seem to suggest that either he was self-conscious when he wrote the latter, and felt obliged to adopt an ornamental and lofty manner, or that he wrote them in collaboration with some one else. His preference for the heavier metals is characteristic of the period. Bismarck was the "Iron Chancellor"; a particularly

bellicose war-time periodical edited by a jingo, the Protestant pastor Traub, was called *Iron Pages* (Eiserne Blätter). The War was often called the "steel bath." Bronze was constantly used to symbolize endurance and strength.

After reaching Breslau, Hindenburg proceeded to the front through Russian Poland. He was impressed by the squalor all round as soon as he had crossed the German frontier. The contrast between Germany and Poland on either side of the frontier is impressive even now. The fine German roads, with their double line of trees, run up to the frontier, where they suddenly go out of repair. The trees cease, or become irregular, and the roads are ill-kept and full of holes.

Russian rule, Hindenburg reflected, had left these parts in moral and material ruin, while the "over-refinement" of the Polish nobility had allowed hardly any "traces of civilization to trickle through to the lower classes." So unfavorably was Hindenburg impressed that he doubted what he had once believed, namely that "the obstinate political apathy of these masses could be turned into a higher impulse (for example, under the influence of the clergy), that might have been ripened into a valuable fighting coöperation" with the Germans.

The arrival of the German forces under two such able leaders as Hindenburg and Ludendorff at once

made itself felt on the Austrian front. At the end of September the Germans began to advance on Warsaw, but after a series of attacks that were disastrous to the enemy, they found themselves unable to hold their forward positions against overwhelming Russian numbers. They retreated in the direction of Czenstochau back to their old lines, in good order, destroying railways, roads, bridges, as they went along. To achieve this success the Russians, besides bringing up new divisions from home, had withdrawn troops from the Austrian front. Thus, the Germans, although compelled to retreat, had been able to relieve the tremendous pressure under which the Austrians threatened to collapse. The Russians were ably led by the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch. Hindenburg, always generous to his opponents, gives him credit for resourceful leadership and big strategic conceptions.

The Russians pressed their attack home, but the German Ninth Army, back in its own positions, met the danger by carrying out a concentration on its left. As soon as this concentration was complete, reënforcements arrived from the West, and the Germans prepared to resume the offensive once more. Hindenburg was now made Commander-in-Chief of all the German forces in the East, that is to say, both of the new Ninth Army

and of the remnants of the Eighth Army in East Prussia. The Ninth Army was commanded by General von Mackensen.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff were bent not merely on relieving the Austrians, but on the total destruction of the Russian army on a front extending from the Baltic to the Carpathians.

For this purpose they needed more reënforcements than they were receiving. But now, as before, Falkenhayn doubted that a victory such as they contemplated was possible. Even if it were, it would not, in his opinion, make all the difference they thought it would. In his book he writes: "No decision in the East, even if it had been as thorough as was conceivable, could have saved us from having to fight it out in the West."

Hindenburg and Ludendorff were confident (providing they got the necessary reënforcements) that they could hit Russia so hard as to knock her out of the War, or, at least, to weaken her so much that the Eastern front could be held by the Austrians alone, leaving the Germans free to deal with the French and British in the West.

Falkenhayn believed that the Russians would always manage to retire, and that the German advance would be pushed ever deeper into Russian territory, victorious, and yet indecisive. No doubt the enemy would suffer gigantic losses, but they

would always be able to form new armies, while ever-growing numbers of Germans would be absorbed by ever-increasing casualties and ever-lengthening lines of communication. He, like the British and the French, was impressed by what was called the "Russian steam roller," although in England at least there was a belief that it would roll forward. What Hindenburg and Ludendorff intended was that it should not roll at all, not even back, but should be destroyed.

It is difficult to say who was in the right. Considering the prodigious import of their victories, it seems likely that with a few more army corps from the West, the annihilation of the Russian army could have been achieved. Whether Russia would have sued for a separate peace and whether she would at least have been unable to resume the offensive against unaided Austria, is very uncertain. Besides, to weaken the Western front was a perilous thing for the Germans to do. Although the French and British had failed to push them back once they had entrenched themselves after the retreat from the Marne, yet the pressure on the German Western front was immense and an Allied break-through would have been a German disaster.

Nor could von Falkenhayn at first relieve his pressure on the British front. To defeat the British army and to capture the Channel ports would be

too big a moral and material triumph to be lightly relinquished. It was not until November 12th that he recognized defeat in Flanders, although even then, and for another week, he persisted in trying to flatten out the Ypres salient. By the time sufficient German reënforcements could be transferred from West to East, the Russians, although terribly beaten, had been able to elude Mackensen and were consolidating rear positions behind the Vistula. On November 26th, when big reënforcements did at last arrive, Hindenburg wrote in the margin of a communication from Falkenhayn the words: "Too late."

These operations in October and November of 1914 showed the same German superiority in leadership that the East Prussian campaign had shown, and once more, as in East Prussia, the Germans gained an immense advantage by picking up the Russian wireless messages, which always told them what the enemy was going to do next. Nevertheless, victorious as the German frontal attacks were, their attempt to outflank and encircle the Russians failed for lack of reënforcements.

It was in this campaign that the exceptional abilities of General Ludendorff were displayed. He had shown resourcefulness and daring in the attack on Liège. In East Prussia he had shown himself an able commander, but the campaign would

have been successful without him. Together with Hindenburg he now had the task of restoring a situation that threatened to become altogether desperate. The two leaders worked together with complete mutual understanding. Ludendorff was a true disciple of von Schlieffen, whose attention he had attracted during the war between Russia and Japan in 1905. Against the opinion of most German military authorities Ludendorff had foretold the Japanese victory.

As a commander he had steadiness combined with daring, and a grasp of detail that did not blur his general strategic conception. He expressed himself with great clearness and precision. His orders could be understood by all ranks, and there was never any doubt as to his meaning. Many critics, both Allied, German, and neutral, considered him the greatest military commander of the whole War. But he had his weaknesses. He knew little about the life of the common soldier. He was never a popular commander. He was often spoken of with respect and admiration, but never with affection. In the supreme crises of the War he lost his head, and remained in a kind of nervous panic for several days. The fatal precipitancy of Germany's peace offer in 1918 was caused by him. Politically he was narrow and ignorant—in this respect he differed from the great strategists, such

as von Schlieffen, von Moltke and Frederick the Great. His apologists have said that political leadership in war-time Germany was extremely bad and that Ludendorff was not to blame for this. It may have been so, but again and again he imposed his political conceptions upon the German Government. It is true that the political leaders were very weak if they submitted to interference from a General, but the fact remains that the political conceptions Ludendorff inspired were altogether inadequate and were distorted by many illusions. This became more and more evident towards the end of the War, but most of all after the War, when Ludendorff's mind gradually lost itself in wild plans against the new German State, and in political superstition and obscurantism.

The Austrians had been saved, but the situation was still precarious. They were unable to draw the Russians back except in coöperation with the Germans or under German leadership. Their troops were still badly demoralized, and their leaders had little prestige left, although their commander, Conrad von Hötzendorff, was a man of unusual intelligence. In spite of the German victories on the Left, the Austrians barely held their own on the Right. For Germany the situation was therefore still extremely anxious, and reënforcements in the West and an Eastern flow of reën-

forcements were as necessary as ever. On December 30th Hindenburg explained the situation in a memorandum to Falkenhayn. "The grievous situation of Austria-Hungary is the salient point in the operations of the Eastern army, and becomes so more and more. About this there can be no illusion. It can only be remedied by Germany with considerable and high-grade reënforcements under energetic German leaders, which must be supplied directly to the Austro-Hungarian army, whether to strengthen its own front or to operate on its right wing." Von Falkenhayn declared that reënforcements such as were demanded by Hindenburg, Ludendorff and Conrad were out of the question. Neither could the Western front be depleted, nor was it even possible to send the reserves, which were being trained at home, to the East. If this were done, he wrote to Hindenburg on January 3rd, there could be no offensive in the West for a long time ahead and the consequences would be "serious." Meanwhile the remnants of the defeated Russians were rallying, so that the German advance was brought to a stop. But what Hindenburg called the great question: "East or West?" remained unanswered, although "Germany's fate depended upon it."

For the time being there was comparative quiet

in the East. Intense cold and deep snow were making operations difficult for both sides.

But Conrad von Hötzendorff was working out a new scheme. He submitted it to the Germans on January 6th, 1915. An Austro-German offensive was to be launched northwards from the Carpathians. A part of the German Ninth Army was to be transferred southwards, while Austrian troops were to be withdrawn from Serbia. Hindenburg, writing to Falkenhayn about this plan, said he thought it a good one, but doubted whether the Austrian troops were really equal to it. If they were, then a very big success could be achieved. Falkenhayn gave his consent to the plan. Hindenburg amplified it by making it include the East Prussian front. His idea was a concentrated attack from East Prussia as well as from Galicia. He was convinced that if there were sufficient reënforcements the entire Russian army could now be destroyed, so that Russia's defeat would, as he wrote to the Kaiser on January 9th, be "final," and the operations would be "decisive for the outcome of the whole war."

All available reserves should, he argued, be devoted to this purpose, whereas if they were sent to the Western front they would be used up in futile frontal attacks, such as had recently been made at Ypres. The armies in the West, he con-

tinued, should, if a series of rear positions were constructed, be able to hold the French and the British without reënforcements. Thus Hindenburg again put forward his idea of a decision in the West. Falkenhayn was only half convinced. He realized that some reënforcements would have to go eastward, else the Russians might again defeat the Austrians, and even push back the Germans. But now, as before, he did not think that an Austro-German offensive could achieve what Hindenburg and Ludendorff thought it could. Reënforcements were sent, but grudgingly. The indecision brought into the general conduct of the War on the German side by the dispute between Easterners and Westerners was threatening to become fatal.

The Austrians were already beaten. They could not carry out another big offensive without German help and without German units being mixed up with their own. Four new German army corps were made available for service in the East. They were composed of fully trained recruits stiffened by officers and men with war service.

With reënforcements inadequate for what Hindenburg and Ludendorff had in mind—namely, a great enveloping offensive—but as many as Falkenhayn would spare, the attack began. The Austrians were defeated after a few initial successes. But on the northern sector Hindenburg and

Ludendorff fought a campaign that culminated in a second "Battle of the Lakes," the so-called "Masurian Winter Battle." The entire Russian Tenth Army was destroyed. Four Russian divisions were surrounded in the forests of the Augustovo, 110,000 prisoners were taken. East Prussia, which had been invaded a second time, was again cleared of the enemy. All Russian counter-attacks were driven off.

It was another of those prodigious victories that were won only by the Germans in the Great War. It was natural that they should give the German people an exaggerated sense of invincibility. The prestige of Hindenburg grew immensely.

But the Russians showed great recuperative powers; the Austrians almost none. The Slav contingent of the Austrian army was beginning to desert, and Conrad had to beg for more German reënforcements, which could be intercalated in their Carpathian front, which was once again being threatened by Russian advances. The Austrians had utterly failed to retrieve their Serbian disaster. The attitude of Italy became menacing, and Rumania again gave anxiety. Falkenhayn was therefore compelled to send most of his reserves eastward. French and British attacks were beaten back in the West, but a German Western offensive was made impossible for a long time to come. This

circumstance was decisive for the Easterners. Falkenhayn planned a big Eastern offensive. He decided to command it himself, and transferred his headquarters from Charleville in France to Pless in Upper Silesia.

But even now his strategic conception differed widely from that of Hindenburg and Ludendorff. He did not believe that the Russian armies could be destroyed in their totality. But he did now believe that they could be battered and broken, that their front could be pierced, and that whole divisions could be cut off, so that their offensive power would be destroyed for a long time to come, leaving the Germans free to concentrate in the West once more and decide the War there. He was convinced that there could be no definite and final decision except in the West. Even now the Central Powers did not have unity of command. They had three commands. While Conrad's ideas differed from those of Hindenburg and Ludendorff, although less than from those of Falkenhayn, the differences between Falkenhayn and Hindenburg-Ludendorff were fundamental. Hindenburg-Ludendorff were in a subordination that must have been galling, and they entered into Falkenhayn's plans only as far as was absolutely necessary. Within the limits set by their chief they tried to carry out principles of strategy that were not his but theirs. Even now

that the German offensive against Russia was to begin at last, and it seemed as though they might have their way, Falkenhayn clung to his plan of "limited offensives."

As in the campaign of October and November, 1914, it is interesting to speculate who was right. War is so uncertain that no sure answer can be given. Falkenhayn failed in the end, after a series of big victories. Would Hindenburg and Ludendorff have done any better? All that can be said is that in the light of after events they may have been right. Nothing happened to show that their general plans were impracticable, even if they were daring. Hindenburg himself does not conceal how deeply he differed from his chief, but he does not claim infallibility or any certainty that the War would have been won if he had had his own way. Nor does he withhold recognition of the skillful leadership of the Russians, and their courage and endurance. His different measures would have met with different Russian counter-measures, and no one can tell what the outcome would have been.

The German offensive began early in May. Their preparations had been completed in great secrecy. Their heavy artillery opened a fire such as had never before been experienced. The Russians were taken by surprise. Eight German divisions formed the spear-head of the Austro-German

advance. The entire Russian front in Galicia and along the Carpathians was broken. The Russians retired in a northerly direction, dragging the southern part of the Polish Vistula front with them. They made a rally at Tarnow and Gorlice, but they were quickly and terribly smashed. The Germans under Mackensen pushed forward in the direction of Lemberg, and broke right through the Russian front. The Russian southern flank was separated from the center. Had the Germans had enough reënforcements, they could have menaced the Russian rear both to the right and to the left. But no reënforcements were available, except a few divisions, which, in spite of preparations for offensive action by the British and the French, were withdrawn from the Western front. The Austrians had to weaken their own forces to send troops to the Italian front, Italy having declared war on May 23rd.

Thus, at the moment of their greatest peril, the Russians had a respite that enabled them to complete their retirement and to join up their severed fronts once again.

They were still west of Warsaw, their line forming a huge salient. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were for an offensive against their right. They believed that an advance in the direction of Vilna would defeat the Russians on a colossal scale, be-

fore the Warsaw salient could be drawn back. A German concentration for this very purpose was being carried out under Hindenburg's and Ludendorff's orders.

But Falkenhayn had a different plan. In a discussion at Posen on June 2nd Hindenburg said it was more "a matter of feeling" whether the attack should take place on the Nareff or northern side of the Niemen. Falkenhayn seems to have been a little contemptuous of this attitude, and he writes that he preferred to rely on his own convictions rather than on the feelings of others. But Hindenburg was a man of few words, with no literary gift at all. He had a natural instinct for military situations that in a crude and simple manner was nearly always sound. This instinct or "feeling" was by no means subservient to Ludendorff's clearly conceived and closely reasoned strategical conceptions, but it harmonized with them, giving them additional strength and persuasive force. That is what made the coöperation of Hindenburg and Ludendorff so perfect. There could have been no such harmony between Hindenburg and Falkenhayn, whose view of the situation was always rational and realistic, not intuitive.

Von Mackensen's army was advancing North in the direction of Brest-Litovsk, with great difficulty, against growing Russian resistance. Falkenhayn

planned an offensive north of Warsaw in the direction of Poltusk, an operation much less bold than the one planned by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, and chiefly meant to relieve the growing pressure on Mackensen's forces, and to drive in the extremity of the Warsaw salient, and perhaps even to cut off the more advanced Russian positions.

This time the differences between Hindenburg-Ludendorff and Falkenhayn were so acute that the nominal Commander-in-Chief of all Germany's military and naval forces, the "Supreme War Lord," the Kaiser himself, had to decide between them. He was in a dilemma. If he had decided for Hindenburg, Falkenhayn would have had to resign, and the Kaiser would have had to transfer his command to Hindenburg. Two German commanders, von Prittwitz and von Moltke, had already been superseded. To supersede a third would have been a very grave step, and would have shaken public confidence in German leadership. To supersede Falkenhayn would have been all the more difficult, as he had just won a tremendous victory over the Russians in the Tarnow-Gorlice offensive. So the Kaiser decided for his plan.

His offensive near Warsaw was set in motion under General von Gallwitz, but the difference with Hindenburg-Ludendorff remained. They could not be persuaded to sacrifice the concentra-

tion further North, and to give von Gallwitz the support he needed. He advanced, but he did not cut off large Russian forces, as Falkenhayn had hoped. The Russians withdrew an unbroken line.

Meanwhile Hindenburg and Ludendorff advanced steadily in the direction of the Dwina, hoping that their plan of a great offensive which would turn the Russian right might still be carried out.

By the end of August the Russians had been driven back along Mitau, Dünaburg, Smorgon, Baronvitschi, Pinsk, Dubno, Tarnopol, Czernowitz. Their losses had been prodigious—in prisoners alone they had lost three-quarters of a million men in that year. Their vast army was reduced to six or seven hundred thousand on that front. The prestige of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaevitch was shaken. He was relieved of his command, which was nominally taken over by the Tsar himself, but really by his Chief of Staff, General Alexeieff. Falkenhayn, had achieved not perhaps all that he had hoped, but nevertheless a very great deal. The Russian armies were unable to resume the offensive for a long time to come. The pressure on Austria-Hungary was relieved, and the Austrians were able to hold up the Italians.

But the German losses, too, had been heavy, and the exhaustion of their troops was very great. Per-

haps the chief weakness of Falkenhayn's campaign was that the captured territory was of little use to the Germans. Had they by outflanking movements compelled the Russians to evacuate vaster stretches of land, and had they occupied Russia as far as Kiev and Odessa, they would have had a grain reserve to draw upon. Falkenhayn, perhaps with the Napoleonic disaster of 1812 in mind, was dubious about any advance that went too far into the interior of Russia. It does not seem that he fully realized the food shortage that was growing graver every month in Germany, and the possibility of relieving it by the supplies that could be got from South Russia if it were occupied by German troops.

Meanwhile the Germans had to help the Austrians in Serbia. The campaign was planned by Falkenhayn, and carried out under von Mackensen. The Serbs were not only a direct menace to Austria, but they stood between Berlin and Constantinople. The Turks were hard pressed by the Anglo-French attack on Gallipoli. A new danger was threatened at Salonika, and it was necessary for the Germans to give the Bulgarians some encouragement.

Bulgaria entered the War on October 6th, and menaced the Serbian right. The Austro-German army crossed the Danube, and advanced into Ser-

bian territory. The campaign was short and ended in a complete German victory. The Serbian army was almost totally destroyed, and the remnants driven out of Serbia. Austria was freed from a menace that had been threatening her for more than a year. Rumania was made to hesitate before joining the Allies against Germany. The heavy pressure on the Turks was relieved. Communication with Constantinople was cleared, thus completing the total defeat of the British and French at Gallipoli, and permanently severing them from their Russian Allies. This perpetuation of Russia's isolation sealed her own doom.

The year 1915 witnessed one prodigious German victory after another. The Allies had no military achievements comparable with those of the Germans, nevertheless the situation had not fundamentally changed. It was true that Russia was much weakened; Serbia had been knocked out of the War, and Bulgaria had come in on the German side. But Austria, too, was much weakened, Great Britain was stronger than ever, and Italy had joined the Allies.

The "open warfare" at which the Germans excelled had come to a standstill on all fronts. Germany was still a besieged fortress; the sorties of the garrison had dented the lines of the besiegers, but had not broken them. Indeed, towards the end

of the year Hindenburg and Ludendorff had to draw back their lines some distance before Russian attacks, and dig themselves in. Permanent positions were taken up all along the Eastern front.

For the troops the campaign had meant death, wounds and deprivation on a gigantic scale. The intense heat of the Russian summer had been hardly less terrible than the intense cold of the Russian winter. The Germans were now facing their second War winter, with no certainty as to when there would be an end.

For Hindenburg the year, although strenuous and, no doubt, full of mortification which his natural loyalty forbade him to express, had been relatively bearable.

The headquarters of the North-Eastern army were at Lotzen, a little town picturesquely situated amid the Masurian Lakes and forests. The inhabitants were naturally full of gratitude to the men who had driven out the invader. The relations between them and the troops were very cordial, and upon Hindenburg they looked with the greatest awe.

He was, as always, a keen huntsman. In his Memoirs he mentions with particular pride that he shot a great elk in one of the Kaiser's hunting grounds, where he was allowed to hunt, "thanks

to His Majesty's gracious permission," during the War winter.

As the cold weather passed away, visitors began to arrive—princes, politicians, officials and so on. Artists came "to perpetuate General Ludendorff and me with brush and chisel, a distinction which in view of the scarcity of our leisure hours, we would gladly have forgone, despite all the amiability and efficiency of the gentlemen in question." Visitors from neutral countries also arrived, among them Sven Hedin, the explorer and "convinced friend of Germany."

Hindenburg had some talks with the Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg. He does not recall that politics were touched on at all. The Chancellor impressed him as a kind, clever, and conscientious man, but Hindenburg does remember that the Chancellor "in judging the military situation was a little too dubious, and therefore not confident enough." Perhaps this was the first inkling of deeper differences to come.

Von Tirpitz was "an entirely different kind of personality." During many walks at headquarters he poured out his grief to Hindenburg—grief that the German fleet lay inactive in port. Von Tirpitz and Hindenburg both thought that there should be a naval offensive as soon as possible, for the chances of success did not improve as the years went on.

Hindenburg also thought that the "haunting prospect of a German landing," accompanied by great naval activity, would have kept strong British forces at home. He did not at all believe that there was any point in keeping the German fleet as a pawn for the peace negotiations, for "an armed force which you do not dare to use in war is a powerless factor in peace also."

Life at headquarters in Lotzen was very regular. Hindenburg would read the morning's dispatches before nine. At nine o'clock he would go to General Ludendorff's quarters and discuss the situation with him. The discussion was usually quite short—sometimes only a few words were exchanged. The rest of the morning would be taken up by a walk with his adjutant, or by further talks with Ludendorff, and by his correspondence—or as much of it as he could deal with in person, for he got an enormous number of letters from all kinds of people. At about noon he and Ludendorff had an audience with the Kaiser. Ludendorff would summarize the military situation. If important decisions had to be made, Hindenburg would submit them himself and obtain the Kaiser's sanction. He writes that the Kaiser nearly always agreed with his arguments. "The Kaiser had an excellent memory—he not only studied the maps with great exactitude, but he would also mark them with his

own hand." The audience would be followed by a conference between Hindenburg and his own Staff. Lunch was as short as possible, even when guests were present. Hindenburg felt it was most important that his officers should be spared social duties as much as possible, for their working day of sixteen hours was sufficiently strenuous. The afternoon was as busy as the forenoon. After dinner there was informal conversation amongst the Staff officers. There was a certain amount of "jocularity," so Hindenburg writes, and he felt it was his "duty towards his colleagues" to give this "jocularity" his personal support. He has left no record of the pleasantries that were perpetrated either by himself or the others. Guests, he says, were often surprised by the general atmosphere of confidence and the informal nature of the conversations. At nine-thirty the day's final dispatches were read, the military situation was studied again, and the positions of the troops were marked on the maps. Another consultation between Hindenburg and Ludendorff often followed, and then the day's final orders were given. Work never came to an end before midnight. It often lasted into the small hours.

In the second winter Hindenburg again did some hunting, this time on Russian soil, but "unfortunately the supply of game had suffered from the

war-like events." Both the troops on the march and poaching peasants had greatly reduced it. In January, 1916, Hindenburg, after a four days' hunt on sledges, brought down a "bison and four stags." A wolf hunt was organized in his honor the same winter in the forest of Augustovo, where four Russian divisions had been annihilated; but the wolves were more elusive than the Russians, and Hindenburg never got within range of them.

CHAPTER VIII

SOLDIERS AND POLITICIANS

HINDENBURG had no illusions about the inconclusive nature of the German victories. "In our headquarters," he writes, "that year was not rung out amid the bright peals of completely satisfying triumph. For us there was something disappointing in the net result of the year's operations and battles." In February, 1916, Falkenhayn transferred his headquarters back from the Eastern to the Western front, from Pless to Charleville. That same month the Germans opened up the Battle of Verdun. It was one of the "limited offensives." He anticipated, and rightly so, that the French would defend Verdun to the utmost of their strength. He believed that the capture of this fortress would be an immense moral victory, that it would wreck the plans for a French and British offensive, and that the French losses would be prodigious and exhausting—perhaps even shattering.

The terrible battle lasted for months. Verdun was not captured, the French losses were very heavy, but so were the German. The French bled, but they did not "bleed to death" as Falkenhayn had hoped. They still had reserves of colored

troops while the British were able to take over a longer front and put many new divisions into the field.

The Germans needed reënforcements, but these could only be drawn from the East. In March the Russians once more attacked along the whole of their front. They fought with extreme courage and tenacity. They were beaten wherever they encountered German troops, but they had shown that their offensive power was by no means at an end. The Germans were compelled to maintain at least half a million men in the East, although renewed French and British attacks were threatening in the West.

On the Austrian front the Russians were more successful. They advanced to a depth of more than 30 miles and took more than 200,000 prisoners. The innate weakness of the Austrians was all the more apparent because they were only able to make a stand on ground where they were stiffened by German contingents. They were routed wherever they faced the Russians alone. Their offensive against the Italians had begun successfully, but had been brought to a standstill by the arrival of strong Italian reënforcements.

It had become necessary to place the entire Eastern front under German command, but the Austrians resisted for reasons of prestige. They did, however, make a concession by leaving the

sector from Riga to Lemberg in charge of the Germans with Hindenburg as Commander-in-Chief. They retained the sector from Lemberg to the Rumanian frontier for themselves. Hindenburg now had a considerable force of Austro-Hungarian troops under his own control, and was able to mix them up with Germans so that his long sector at least was free from spots that would break under the Russian attack.

So little did the Battle of Verdun wreck the plans of the Western Allies, that in June, while the fight was still raging, another offensive was begun by the British, the Battle of the Somme. The expenditure of British lives and munitions was immense; nevertheless, the attack was a failure. But the Germans were too hard pressed on all sides to undertake an adequate counter-offensive.

The Russians took Czernovitz and the Italians Gorizia. These victories made the Rumanians feel that they could safely attack an enemy who was no longer able to hold his own. They declared war on Austro-Hungary in August. The Central Powers now had a new foe with a fresh army of three-quarters of a million to face and another long front to hold. They had some six million troops who were now fighting against ten or eleven million—and the United States had not yet come into the War.

Falkenhayn's strategy was not bringing the War to an end. A change was felt to be necessary. Hindenburg was made chief of the General Staff in his place with Ludendorff as Quartermaster-General. Falkenhayn took charge of the Rumanian campaign. The need for complete unity of command had become very urgent, but it was not brought about until September, when a Supreme War Leadership (Oberste Kriegsleitung) was created and exercised by Hindenburg in the name of the Kaiser. Hindenburg thus commanded the armies of the German Empire, the Dual Monarchy, Bulgaria and Turkey, although, however, even now he remained dependent upon agreement and compromise often reached only with great difficulty between these Powers.

This arrangement was of moral as well as of military importance. It was very popular. The great argument between the two schools of strategy had been decided in favor of the soldier who, in German eyes, was a kind of Titan, an epic hero who, wherever he struck, made the enemy reel back, bloody and broken, whose strategic conceptions were simple, grandiose and daring, and whose genius had been held in check by the lesser though more brilliant mind of Falkenhayn. And his second—second only to himself in military genius—Ludendorff, was to remain with him. These two

alone could bring the War to a quick, victorious end.

Their victories on the Eastern front, particularly the second Masurian Battle, had amplified the legend born at the Battle at Tannenberg.

An armored cruiser was named *Hindenburg* after the national hero and launched by his wife. Great wooden statues of him were set up in German cities. They looked like the huge crude sculptures of some primitive people. Iron nails were sold near every statue, and whoever bought one drove it into the wood with a hammer available for the purpose. The wooden colossus began to look like a gigantic hedgehog and when it was all covered by nail-heads became known as an "iron Hindenburg," symbolizing the iron character of the hero. The proceeds of the sale of nails went to the German Red Cross.

The Rumanians outnumbered the German and Austrian troops that advanced against them by about three to one. Nevertheless they were totally defeated. Falkenhayn chased them out of Transylvania through the Carpathian passes (which they could have held) and, invading Rumania itself, his armies swept forward until only a small part of the country was left in Rumanian hands. Mackensen contributed to Falkenhayn's victory by defeating the Rumanians in the Dobrudja. The small

forces that won these victories were composed of Germans, Austrians, Hungarians, Turks and Bulgars, but most of the fighting had, as usual, fallen to the Germans. A vast territory, rich in grain, cattle and oil, was now in the hands of the Central Powers, and it seemed as though the pressure of the British blockade would be perceptibly relieved.

Nevertheless, little more had been won than time —and not much time. Germany had pushed her enemies further back, but not one of them (with the insignificant exception of Montenegro) had suffered final defeat. The Rumanian army was recuperating on a prolongation of the Russian front. Even the Serbian army, in spite of the disasters it had suffered, was reëntering the War and operating against Germans and Bulgars in Macedonia.

Germany was still a besieged fortress. Her garrison had made audacious and shattering sorties, but the encirclement remained unbroken. The fronts and lines of communication were now so long and absorbed so many troops that there were not enough left over for big offensive operations in the West.

So desperate indeed was Germany's plight (for all her many victories) that a desperate remedy was decided upon—the unrestricted submarine campaign. The German Government had been very reluctant to make use of this remedy, knowing that

it would probably bring the United States into the War. But at the end of the year 1916 it was evident that German victories in the battle-field were not winning the War. That the War must be won with all speed was equally evident, for Germany, with diminishing resources, was facing an enemy with ever-growing resources.

At the end of 1916 Ludendorff informed the German Foreign Office that if the unrestricted U-boat campaign did not begin, the War would be lost. He was supported by Hindenburg. The Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, disagreed, but Hindenburg himself replied in a sharply worded telegram that "military measures" when "recognized as right" must not "be postponed by any negotiations" or else the "energetic conduct of the War" would be "paralyzed."

The naval supported the military authorities and prevailed upon the Kaiser to take their view.

They believed they could make England sue for peace before American intervention would be effective. The submarine campaign began. At first it was highly successful and in the spring of 1917 enough merchant shipping was being destroyed to make it certain that if the rate of destruction could be maintained England's imports of food and raw materials would be so reduced that she would have to surrender unconditionally before the

end of the year. This was perhaps the greatest danger that ever threatened England in the whole of her history. But by the summer the English counter-measures were beginning to prevail. German submarines were destroyed in ever-growing numbers, and by the end of the year Germany's determined and desperate attempt to destroy her chief enemy had not only failed but had brought another and immensely formidable foe into the war against her, the United States.

Even then the Germans underrated their new opponents. Dr. Hergt, a prominent Conservative leader, declared that the Americans would not make much difference, as they could "neither fly nor swim" across the Atlantic. Hindenburg, too, had illusions on this subject. In November, 1917, he still believed that fear of the Japanese would prevent the Americans from sending troops to Europe in great numbers and, even if an American army did arrive, he thought "it would make no difference in the European theater of War."

In 1916 the Germans had achieved another of their extraordinary prodigies of skill, determination and valor, the Battle of Jutland. In a few hours they sunk fourteen British cruisers and torpedo boats with a total tonnage of 112,000. They themselves lost little more than half this tonnage in the battle. The British dead numbered more

than twice the German, and yet the battle remained quite meaningless and had no influence upon the course of the War. The British fleet, although inferior to that of the German in certain technical ways, retained a preponderance that allowed the Germans little hope that there would ever be a decisive naval action. Even this small hope diminished as time went on, for the relative superiority of the Allied Navies was augmented by American ships and the technical defects that had given the British a disadvantage at Jutland were remedied, so that in spite of their achievement the Germans, in comparison with their enemies, became steadily weaker at sea.

While the submarine war was developing, they stood on the defensive and reorganized their manpower and their supply of war material. All the resources of the country were subordinated to the War and all available men were drafted into the army. All available men and women were passed from the industries that were not essential to those that were. The army itself also underwent reorganization to meet the new conditions of warfare. The whole scheme was called the "Hindenburg Plan," but in reality it was Ludendorff's.

On the Somme front the Germans built a new line of rear defenses which they called the "Siegfried Line." The Allies called it the "Hindenburg

Line." The Germans withdrew upon it by stages, laying waste the country and destroying roads, railways and bridges as they withdrew. By sacrificing only a small stretch of territory they gained new positions of immense strength. The withdrawal was carried out with great skill and secrecy, and without losses, the British not realizing it had taken place until it was complete.

The hope that the Russian Revolution in March, 1917, would mean Peace in the East was destroyed by Kerenski's decision to continue the War on the side of the Allies. This decision was one of the many causes of the November Revolution and the final triumph of the Bolshevik party. Another cause was provided by the Germans, who allowed Lenin to travel from Switzerland through German territory into Russia. They anticipated that this revolutionary agitator would promote further revolt and disruption and so speed up the final defeat of the Russian armies. This anticipation proved to be right. The Russian front collapsed altogether, the Bolsheviks, led by Lenin, seized the supreme power and made peace with Germany in December. It is not known who first suggested that Lenin (and with him several other revolutionaries) should be let through. The German Foreign Office was asked for its sanction and readily gave it. Whether

the German High Command was consulted or not has remained obscure.

Meanwhile the French attacked south of the Somme under General Nivelle. They were totally defeated and so shaken and demoralized that whole battalions mutinied and, all of a sudden, the beginnings of a revolutionary movement showed themselves in France. The movement was quickly suppressed. Many French soldiers were executed or sent to African penal settlements.

But on the German side, too, there were symptoms that alarmed the authorities, not in the army but in the navy. The so-called "naval mutinies" of 1917 were not revolutionary nor were they, strictly speaking, mutinies, but rather in the nature of pacifist demonstrations. Nevertheless, two of the more prominent participants were executed. Their fellow-sailors looked upon them not as traitors but as martyrs, and their memory is still honored by the German working-class.

These demonstrations were the first outward signs of disunity amongst the German people. They revealed a deepening popular distrust of German war-policy and an intense longing for peace.

German war-policy was never clearly formulated or even clearly conceived. The conflict between annexationists and the anti-annexationists did not

cease until the war was irretrievably lost. The High Command, that is to say, Ludendorff and with him Hindenburg, were in favor of annexing the Longwy-Briey coal basin and strips of frontier territory that would make it easier to defend Germany's two great industrial areas, the Ruhr and Upper Silesia.

Germany had no definite Eastern policy. Hindenburg and Ludendorff were for an independent Poland, though one under German-Austrian tutelage, and they hoped that Polish volunteers would flock to the German army. But the Poles showed no enthusiasm whatever for the German cause. Nor did the Germans promote Polish independence with any zeal, for they feared it might make a separate peace with Russia more difficult. The German Government and the High Command were unwilling to relinquish all control of the Baltic Provinces, which had a German landowning gentry and a civilization which was largely German and would therefore have offered favorable opportunities for German colonists. The peace that was eventually concluded with Russia by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk gave Germany a vast new empire. In his Memoirs Hindenburg speaks of these annexations with approval, not only for military reasons but also because "Germanism (das Deutschtum) would be able to develop more freely there and

an extensive colonization of those districts could take place."

In July, 1917, the German Reichstag passed a resolution in favor of peace without conquest. The real wishes of the majority of the German people were thus revealed. Had this resolution become the real political program of the German Government and had it received the unwavering support of Hindenburg, then the Allies would have found it more and more difficult to appear as the champions of self-determination in the eyes of the world. The resolution was a sign of national strength, not weakness, and had it not been half secretly and half openly counteracted both by political and military leaders, it would have placed Germany in a position of very great moral power. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a complete reversal of the policy expressed in the resolution and perpetuated the enmity of the Russians with whom the peace was concluded.

The Kaiser, who might have exercised a big and perhaps decisive influence on affairs, had neither the personality nor the political insight to carry any weight at all. The Imperial Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, a man of intelligence and integrity, could make no stand against the High Command.

Not that Hindenburg and Ludendorff had any personal ambition. Hindenburg indeed would have

preferred to leave politics alone, but he was Ludendorff's partner and it was Ludendorff's strong will that gave this partnership its political twist. The German Parties spent a great deal of their time in quarreling with one another. The Socialists, who from beginning to end were consistently for a speedy peace without annexations, were continually at variance amongst themselves over questions that were mainly doctrinaire. Their differences became so acute that in the end they divided into two parties. They were still divided when the Revolution came and when their unity was in greater need than it had ever been before and would ever be again. The Reichstag was unable to assert its collective will—perhaps this will was weaker than in countries with longer experience of parliamentary democracy.

Amid so many confused forces that paralyzed each other there was the prodigious Hindenburg legend. It was only natural that it should be exploited. No one would have dared oppose him or say a word against him. Political leaders, the parties, the Reichstag, von Moltke and Falkenhayn —all had failed. Hindenburg alone could achieve everything.

He again and again refers to his distaste of politics. Diplomacy he thought was alien to the German character. Nevertheless he became a

political force—the resultant force of a number of forces of which the personality of Ludendorff was the chief. None of the military commanders in the great Western democracies were allowed to have such an influence on the political conduct of the War as Hindenburg was allowed to have in Germany.

Germany did not enter the War with an annexationist program, and the German people simply believed that the War was one of defense against an attack that had suddenly come from all sides. When the invader was thrown out, they looked upon Hindenburg as their national liberator. But the annexationists gradually divided public opinion and in the end destroyed national unity. At the front the German troops suffered what the troops of other warring nations were suffering, but the Germans at home—particularly the women and children and the old and feeble—suffered far greater need and hunger than those in France or England. The winter of 1916-1917, the so-called "Turnip Winter," was an experience such as no civilized nation had passed through in modern times. The British blockade had begun to tell with full force. There was not enough milk for babies, and not enough meat and fat for any one. The chief food, even of the wealthy, was turnips.

The German people were willing to undergo

privation at home and slaughter at the front so long as the War seemed a struggle for national existence. But they were not willing to suffer for the sake of annexations in which they took no particular interest. This the annexationists never understood. Nor did they understand the effect of their program in hostile countries, although it was quite clear that they were fortifying the arguments of those who declared that Germany was waging a war of conquest and must therefore be utterly destroyed.

Thus the annexationists weakened Germany and strengthened the Allies. Ludendorff even imagined that foreign conquests would give the German troops the ardor he thought they were beginning to lack.

Across this division in German public opinion lay the Hindenburg legend. Would it stand the strain? The High Command had achieved wonders in leading its armies against the ring of enemies. It alone could break the ring and put an end to the pressure of the blockade. But it was also countenancing and, later on, supporting a war policy that could only consolidate the ring and prolong the struggle for no advantage worth the immense sacrifice. Thus public opinion began to become less single-minded in admiration of the High Command.

Hindenburg himself had always belonged to the

military caste. His simple conception of duty and obedience allowed no room for any kind of doubt as to whether there might not be kinds of duty and obedience different from those he practiced. Duty to him was simply the loyal performance of the allotted task and obedience was simply obedience to existing authority—of the workmen to their employers, of the common soldiers to their officers, of every one (himself included) to the Kaiser, of the Kaiser to God.

He would have to wait another year before he would realize for the first time in his life and in the supreme crisis of his life that there could be a conflict of loyalties. He was personally in favor of annexations, particularly in the East; but if the Kaiser and Government had decided against them he would loyally have accepted the decision. But as things were his influence told steadily in favor of the annexationists, except on those few occasions when the official policy of the Government was definitely non-annexationist.

He was never a man of the people but always of the governing class. The new ideas and aspirations that were being born in Germany and were to shatter all he venerated escaped his notice entirely. He had witnessed the Paris Commune in 1871. But it had never occurred to him that this had been something more than a mere outbreak of hooligan-

ism, and that such things may become nation-wide, and overthrow Empires and Dynasties.

Had he realized what was going on in the minds of the German people, especially of the working-class on whom he depended for millions of his best troops and for the supply of war materials, he might have done his country an immense service, he might have conveyed to the few above what was happening amongst the many below. But it remained below until it forced an outlet in a great political upheaval. He might—had he understood—have expressed the belief—had he thus believed—that Germany should renounce all conquests, that he and his soldiers were willing to fight for the independence of Germany and the integrity of her soil, but for no more. Merely to have said this would have been a deed of immense benefit to Germany, just as to have said the opposite was a disaster to all.

But Hindenburg was led by Ludendorff in political as in military affairs, and so he identified himself with one of the two factions into which Germany was dividing—against the great masses of the people. The Hindenburg legend began to wither, for to be victorious in many battles was no longer enough.

In times of national crisis it will often seem that the chaos of movements and factions can best be

ended by the strong will of one man, a dictator. This solution naturally appeals to those who believe in the authoritarian state. Under Bismarck, Germany had risen to immense wealth and power and there is no doubt that his domineering personality cut clean through many tangled problems. Whether he did not create far greater difficulties for the next generation is another matter. There are some who look upon the political inefficiency of war-time Imperial Germany (as compared with her great military efficiency) as the result of Bismarck's tutelage and of the authoritarian state beneath which the spirit of independence and critical judgment languished.

In the War of 1870 Germany had been under the political and military leadership of a triumvirate—King William of Prussia (who became William I, German Emperor, as well as King of Prussia, when the Empire was founded at Versailles in 1871), the Chancellor Count Bismarck, and Field-Marshal von Moltke. Von Moltke, whose nephew lost the Battle of the Marne in 1914, was not only a great commander, but also a man of unusual intellectual power. Bismarck, whatever limitations he may have had, was a grim realist, with a profound instinct for international affairs. The King, although without qualities that would have brought him fame if he had not been a

monarch, was nevertheless ideally suited to be the mediator between the Chancellor and the Field-Marshal.

In 1914 also Germany was under a triumvirate. But the Emperor William II had none of the solid, homely qualities of his grandfather. He was impulsive, vain, romantic, without inner strength, and very easily influenced. The Chancellor, von Bethmann Hollweg, was a wise and gifted man, but not a Bismarck. The younger von Moltke was not comparable with his uncle. The combined tactical abilities of Hindenburg and Ludendorff were perhaps together equal to the elder von Moltke's, but whether they together were his equal as strategists is very doubtful, and they were certainly inferior to him in that general intelligence, knowledge and political realism which the greatest commanders have possessed. While their coöperation augmented their military abilities, it also magnified their political errors. Thus their combined military strength was offset by combined political weakness.

Germany's desperate plight in the winter of '16 and '17 fostered dreams of another Bismarck, of a dictator.

But who was to be dictator? It could only be Hindenburg. The annexationists were bent on getting rid of Bethmann Hollweg whatever hap-

pened. On February 25th, 1917, his chief enemies met in the Hôtel Adlen at Berlin and decided to urge the Kaiser to place the conduct of the War above politics and make Hindenburg Imperial Chancellor.

But the plan found no response. Hindenburg was obviously not in the least suited to be a Dictator-Chancellor. Besides, he was free from ambition and shrank from all non-military pursuits. His one purpose, now as ever, was to serve his Emperor and his country in the only way in which he could remain of service, namely, in the traditional military way. Had he become Chancellor, the real dictator would doubtless have been Ludendorff, but he too, for all his dominating qualities, was free from personal ambition.

Neither would have been willing to become the conscious instrument of a particular group whose leaders were engaged in a political intrigue.

Hindenburg's and Ludendorff's political influence arose out of their limitations that allowed them to see in mere jingoism, and in the parties that cultivated it, true political wisdom, and in robust patriotic verbiage true strength. They genuinely believed that to promote this wisdom and augment this strength was their duty to their country. They did so without really wishing to interfere with politics or to become the agents of any polit-

ical tendency, but simply as part of the conduct of the military and naval operations as they conceived them.

Thus they brought about the unrestricted submarine campaign and therefore the intervention of the United States. They precipitated the fall of Bethmann Hollweg, the wisest and most moderate of Germany's war-time statesmen. They did much, if not most, to check the anti-annexationists and they were partly responsible for the annexationist Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the total defeat which their military triumphs postponed was made all the more certain in the end by their political errors.

They began to take an active part in politics almost immediately after the victories in Rumania. Hindenburg had a short spell of illness and Ludendorff took the opportunity to establish contact with conservative politicians. Hindenburg's partisanship in the controversy over the submarine campaign was then emphatically expressed. This alone was enough to defeat every attempt to avert the campaign. But although the Chancellor gave way hostility to him did not cease. This hostility was shared not only by the Pan-Germans, whose annexationism had no bounds, but also by the National Liberals, to whom Dr. Stresemann (himself an ardent annexationist) belonged. The Chan-

cellor was simply accused of being weak and vacillating in the political conduct of the War. The High Command shared and encouraged this hostility, although in Hindenburg at least it was not personal.

The impetuous and stubborn Ludendorff was bent, not on arrogating any additional power for himself, but in promoting a German policy that would be what he considered "strong." Both he and Hindenburg were deliberately dragged into the discussions about a possible change in the Chancellorship by their conservative friends. With their whole traditions and their general outlook, not to speak of the particular views they held, there was no doubt which side they would take.

The Chancellor fully realized what was going on, but for a time he was able to keep the support of the Kaiser. But when his enemies arranged that Hindenburg and Ludendorff should have audiences with the Kaiser in political as well as military matters (on the plea that the political and military conduct of the War were inseparable), the Chancellor was lost. Hindenburg and Ludendorff became so convinced that he must make way for a "strong" man, that they at last gave the Kaiser to understand that if Bethmann Hollweg did not resign, they themselves would resign.

It is not likely that Hindenburg realized the full

implications of what he was doing. He had been maneuvered into this by conservative politicians with the active and determined connivance of Ludendorff. His resignation was quite unthinkable. The Kaiser could, of course, have given him a severe lecture, and there is no doubt that Hindenburg would have withdrawn his threat to resign had the Kaiser asked him to do so. But the Kaiser was not the man to take any determined action. He knew nothing but the alternative—Bethmann Hollweg or Hindenburg, a mere politician or the victor of Tannenberg. Naturally Bethmann Hollweg had to go. He was succeeded by Dr. Michaelis.

The new Chancellor was as weak as he was narrow. He combined piety with a disingenuousness that made him altogether untrustworthy, at least in political matters. The combined effort of conservative politicians and the High Command to replace Bethmann Hollweg by a "strong man" had failed ignominiously. Why Michaelis was chosen has never been fully explained. It seems that he once contradicted Ludendorff in some departmental matter and that Ludendorff concluded he must therefore be a "strong man." The deep impression Dr. Michaelis's great piety made on the Empress also seems to have told in his favor.

He was much embarrassed by the Reichstag's

Peace Resolutions. Scheidemann, the Socialist leader, gives a detailed account of the misgivings felt both by the new Chancellor and by the High Command over this resolution. There was a meeting attended by Dr. Michaelis, Scheidemann and other political leaders, as well as by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, in the garden of the Ministry of the Interior. Hindenburg said he thought the resolution "too soft" and asked if it could not be "made a little stronger." Michaelis, who would have to embody in it his inaugural speech before the Reichstag, gave the impression that he did not quite know what to think. But the Party leaders were satisfied when he showed them the draft of his speech.

But when he made the speech he referred to the resolution in terms that left room for doubt whether he really accepted it. There could be no doubt about its meaning. He had gone through it sentence by sentence with the Party leaders and there was no room left for ambiguity or misunderstanding. But when he mentioned it in his speech he added the words "as I understand it," as though he had an interpretation of his own that might be different from what its authors had intended. And he had indeed such an interpretation which he had kept all to himself while professing to agree with the terms of the resolution. What he really thought

was expressed in a letter he wrote at the time to the Crown Prince (who had also been intriguing against Bethmann Hollweg and against a peace without annexations). In this letter he speaks of "the notorious resolution," of how "his interpretation of it" had "stripped it of its most dangerous intentions," adding that "with the resolution as it stands we can make any peace we like."

Not until ten years later, when the letter was published, did Dr. Michaelis's treachery—and the connivance of the Crown Prince—come to light.

Even if the more discreditable details of these incidents remained unrevealed until later years, there was a good deal of talk and rumor. There was no hiding the fact that Bethmann Hollweg had resigned under pressure from Hindenburg and Ludendorff and that Dr. Michaelis was largely a creation of theirs—which did not reflect very favorably on their judgment.

Public confidence was weakened instead of fortified. The Hindenburg legend was withering slowly but steadily.

But as the year advanced it revived a little, for victories on the battle-field again raised vain hopes. The Germans withstood the terrible British offensive at Paschendaele. The Austrians, no match for the Russians, were more than a match for the Italians. It was true that they had fallen back and

had lost Gorizia, but the Italians fought in greatly superior numbers and lost more than twice as many men as the Austrians. And now, on the Isonzo, a few German divisions so augmented the strength of the Austrians that the Italians were totally defeated. They broke and fled, abandoning a great stretch of Italian soil. They did not rally until they had crossed the River Piave, which they were able to hold with the help of a few French and British divisions who had hurried to the rescue of their beaten Ally.

In the East the Russians at last collapsed. The annexationist Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed. It seemed to the Germans that the "decisive victory" could now be won in the West, for by transferring the troops they had in the Eastern to the Western front they would, for the first time in the War, face the French and British in equal numbers, though with far fewer reserves, so that the victory would have to be a swift one. Hindenburg and Ludendorff prepared the next year's offensive, knowing that if it failed the War would be irretrievably lost.

CHAPTER IX

DEFEAT

THERE was a certain impetuosity in Ludendorff's stubborn genius that could not tolerate opposition. But when he became angry or impatient and began to lose his steady grasp of realities, it was the imperturbable composure of Hindenburg that would bring him back to a saner mood. Hindenburg's stolid calm was always a damper in every kind of panic or excitement.

The two commanders had all the resources of a great military and naval Power behind them in dealing with the enemy. But whenever they met resistance from their fellow-countrymen, particularly the politicians, their only ultimate resource was the threat of resignation. This method they came to use almost as a matter of habit. It was usually successful.

The annexationists used Hindenburg's name and exploited the legend as though the Pan-German ideology of conquest and militant Imperialism had found in him its chief champion. He seemed only half aware that this exploitation was going on. An attempt was made to enlighten him so that he might dissociate himself from these super-

patriots. Scheidemann, the Socialist leader, and Friedrich Neumann, who was a great Liberal, talked the matter over. Neumann tried, through an intermediary, to persuade Hindenburg to make a statement that would save him from being identified with any political parties or movements. Hindenburg appeared to agree that the use of his name for political ends was objectionable, but he could not be prevailed upon to say so publicly. Thus he remained associated, at least indirectly, with the annexationists, for he had in effect, if not with deliberation, done much to promote their cause. There was no doubt that his real sympathies were with them. In February, 1918, he wrote a letter (which was not published for several years after) and "strongly repudiated the imputation" that he had "declared for a peace without annexations."

And even if he himself remained in the background and it was Ludendorff who again and again took political action, it was with Hindenburg that the ultimate responsibility for the encouragement the annexationists got from the High Command rested, for he was Ludendorff's chief and nothing Ludendorff did could have been done without his sanction, whether tacit or expressed.

The political offensive against Bethmann Hollweg had ended in a very negative victory. It soon

became apparent to all, and not only to the moderate parties, that Michaelis was quite useless as a Chancellor. He could not last, but before he went he wrecked another possibility of making peace by answering the Papal offer of mediation in a disingenuously evasive manner. He was succeeded by Count Hertling, who was an accomplished philosopher but a poor politician.

The chief German negotiator at Brest-Litovsk was the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, von Kühlmann, a diplomat of unusual skill and insight. The Russian peace might have satisfied the most exorbitant annexationist, but as a matter of fact it did not. Hindenburg and Ludendorff wanted Germany to annex territory that was inhabited by about two million Poles, and, just as they had intrigued against Bethmann Hollweg, so they now intrigued against von Kühlmann.

Even amongst the German military leaders there were some who thought that annexations on this scale would be unwise. General Hoffmann, the Chief of the General Staff on the Eastern front, for example, relates in his Memoirs how the Kaiser asked him his opinion on this very subject. The General replied that he would rather not express an opinion that would differ from that of the High Command. But the Kaiser insisted and the General said he thought only as much Polish soil should

be annexed as would modify Germany's Eastern frontier so as to make it better adapted to defense. The modifications he proposed would not bring more than about 100,000 Poles under German rule.

The Kaiser agreed, but Hindenburg and Ludendorff were deeply offended by what the General had done, although he had only spoken when the Kaiser had ordered him to speak and he could no longer refuse. They demanded his recall and, employing their habitual method of getting what they wanted, threatened to resign. But the Kaiser did the fair thing and protected General von Hoffmann. Hindenburg and Ludendorff did not carry out their threat. But they made von Hoffmann feel their displeasure in a series of orders and questions they sent him. He writes in his Memoirs, that this showed him how "great men can be very small sometimes."

Having lost the submarine campaign and having —thanks largely to the interference of the High Command—bungled whatever chance there may have been of ending the War by political action, Germany was now reduced to one hope—decisive victory on the battle-field. It was, as Ludendorff recognized at the time, the only hope.

In the winter of 1917-18, while division after division was being transferred from the Eastern

to the Western front, he and Hindenburg made their plans for the final struggle.

More than in any of the previous campaigns in which Hindenburg and Ludendorff had coöperated, the one now being elaborated was Ludendorff's own, although Hindenburg gave it his general sanction.

The plan was to break through the French and British lines and convert trench warfare into open warfare. As in 1914, the German High Command reckoned with a swift and decisive victory. Only if it did not come this time, defeat was sure, for all the possibilities that remained even after the defeat on the Marne in 1914 had been exhausted.

The offensive was prepared with great secrecy. Troops received a special training in open warfare. As there was to be a rapid advance on a large front, units had to be supplied with additional transport, and mobile columns were formed to coöperate with them. Dummy preparations were made at different parts of the front to deceive the enemy.

After a short but intense bombardment in the early morning of March 21st on the front between the Rivers Scarpe and Oise, the Germans quickly overran the British lines. The Second British Army under General Gough was totally defeated. By the 23rd the Germans had advanced more than 35 miles and had taken 90,000 prisoners as well as

great quantities of munitions, stores and transport.

It seemed as though the High Command had triumphed at last. On the evening of the 23rd a telegram was sent to the Imperial Chancellor, Count Hertling, to announce a German victory. On the 25th, the Kaiser ordered the public flying of flags and firing of salutes to celebrate "the victory in the Battle of Monchy, Cambrai, Quentin, La Fère."

On the same day he wrote congratulatory letters to Hindenburg and Ludendorff.

He referred to the battle, "probably the greatest in the history of the world," and awarded Hindenburg the "Iron Cross with Golden Rays." This decoration had been specially created as an award for General Blücher after the Battle of Waterloo. It was a symbol not merely of courage or of victory in any one battle, but of a victoriously concluded war. It had never been awarded to any one, not even to the great Moltke, since Blücher's day. Upon Ludendorff the Kaiser conferred another rare decoration, the "Grand Cross of the Iron Cross," which was usually awarded to commanders-in-chief after a victorious battle, siege or campaign, and never when the operations were still going on as the "March Offensive" was.

No wonder the German public, amid the flags, the salutes and awards, fully believed that "the

great decisive" battle had at last been fought and won.

And yet, even before the 25th the German offensive had begun to fail. It was to have been converted into a north-west drive in the direction of Arras that would roll up the whole of the British right. Had this plan succeeded, the Germans would have achieved not only what they had vainly tried to achieve after the Battle of the Marne in 1914, the seizure of the Channel ports, but also the destruction of almost the entire British army.

Their Center and Left continued to make progress. But the British resistance at Arras compelled them to change their whole plan. Their offensive was converted from a north-west drive into a drive that spread out fan-wise. Such a diffused operation on so wide a front and against an enemy whose resistance steadily stiffened required far more reserves of men and material than they possessed. As the offensive slowed down, the German lines formed a huge salient, with inadequate defensive positions thinly held and exposed to counter-offensives on both flanks. The advance was held up. To stand still was perilous. To go back was impossible.

The Germans could not leave their initial success unexploited. But a victory such as they had originally planned had become impossible as early as

the second day of the battle. The Germans had won a tactical success and suffered a strategic defeat.

Nevertheless, this tremendous blow had made a deep impression on the Allies. Another might follow and the narrow margin that separated them from defeat might be narrowed down to nothing next time. They had been taken by surprise and then soundly, and all but decisively, beaten. The secrecy of the German plans was so well preserved and the blow fell with such speed, that the Allies could not guess where it would fall next.

On March 26th they placed their entire forces on the Western front under the supreme leadership of General Foch, thus achieving unity of command after more than three and a half years of war.

The German "March Offensive" came to a standstill just short of Amiens, so that the Allies were saved the loss of their main lateral railway communication. But even so, Hindenburg and Ludendorff still hoped to retrieve the stragetic defeat by means of an offensive in the region of Armentières. Its purpose was twofold—to draw British troops from the Amiens front so that the "March Offensive" could be pushed home, and to drive the British in Flanders back on the sea coast, where, having no rear, they would either have to surrender or, if they could do so with sufficient speed,

embark and be taken either back to England or to some French port. In any case, the British were again threatened with a prodigious calamity.

The Germans, again after a short intense bombardment, advanced rapidly across the River Lys on April 9th. The British lost ground that had been won by some of the heaviest fighting in the whole War, but their resistance stiffened and French reënforcements arrived. The Germans' "April Offensive" came to a standstill on May 1st —another tactical success and strategic defeat.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff believed that the War might still be won if some 200,000 able-bodied men could be transferred from the fields and factories at home into the army. But they were informed by the Government that this could not be done. They therefore demanded that there should be an attempt to conclude peace by making overtures to the Allies. Even now, although they had little belief in a victory that would allow Germany to impose her own terms, they did not believe that she would be defeated. They thought that if the politicians offered peace and the soldiers hammered away at the enemy, some kind of compromise would result. Besides, one could never tell what repeated blows might not do to the Allied front.

In his Memoirs Hindenburg writes that the plan was "to shake the hostile building so much by par-

tial blows following in close succession that it would collapse sooner or later." Although the "April Offensive" had failed, the High Command still believed that the most shattering blow could be dealt in Flanders, where the British could not retire very far without being driven into the sea.

To draw Allied troops away from the Flemish front, and weaken it for the offensive that was planned, the Germans attacked further South on May 27th. Their initial success was far greater than they had expected. Before the day was out they had pierced the Allied line to a depth of over 12 miles. So they changed their plans. Instead of making this a limited subsidiary offensive meant only to lighten their task in Flanders, they converted it from a tactical to a strategic operation, and widening their attack, they advanced on both sides of Rheims and carried the apex of their new salient more than 35 miles into the Allied lines and for the second time in the War they reached the River Marne. But they could advance no further, they were held up in front of Rheims, nor were they able to take the Forest of Villers Cotterêts.

For the third time they had failed, and a third big, weakly held, ill-protected salient exposed them to counter-attack. The great fear of the High

Command was that the initiative might pass to the French and British.

Fearing to lose it, the Germans tried to push their third offensive home. But they were checked by a French counter-attack at Compiègne and by the middle of June their advance was held up altogether.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff now lost all hope of fighting a great "decisive battle." They took refuge in vague, unfounded hopes—for example, that the Allied armies might collapse "from within" as the Russian armies had done. Every vestige of a general strategic plan had vanished.

Hindenburg thought that if there could be a lull in the fighting, and the German troops could have a long rest, something might still be achieved.

Both he and Ludendorff urged the Chancellor Hertling to make peace overtures. They demanded a "peace offensive," and Ludendorff complained bitterly that they were getting no support.

But the Chancellor, who had been impressed by the confidence of the High Command only a few months before, did not think a sudden "peace offensive" very practicable. He was not the "strong man" for whose sake Bethmann Hollweg, Michaelis, and Kühlmann had been overthrown. He suffered from the debilities of old age. Sessions that were at all long overtaxed his strength. His

eyesight was so weak that he could read only with great difficulty. The burden of his office was far more than he could bear.

Just as Ludendorff had been impatiently aggressive because Bethmann Hollweg had wanted to make peace, so was he now equally aggressive because Count Hertling was in no particular hurry to make peace.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff did not communicate directly with the Government, but through an intermediary, Colonel von Haeften. They let it be known that Germany could conclude a peace that was "compatible" with "the honor and interest" of the Allies "also." But beyond this they were not very helpful about the biggest difficulty of all, Belgium. Von Kühlmann, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, urged immediate peace overtures; but unless Germany agreed to the complete independence and territorial integrity of Belgium, no peace offer had any chance of being accepted. Both von Kühlmann and Count Hertling knew this. But Hindenburg and Ludendorff, while letting it be known that their views on the Belgian question were moderate, would not commit themselves to anything definite. It was not, of course, for them, but for the Chancellor, to make German policy. But he was too weak a man and too tired,

either to make policy or to keep the High Command in its place.

On June 24th von Kühlmann made a statement in the Reichstag at the request of the Chancellor and of the party leaders, who wanted to know exactly how matters stood after the total defeat of Russia and after such great victories on the Western front (the inconclusive nature of these victories was still imperfectly understood).

Von Kühlmann said no more than had been fully discussed and approved both by the Chancellor and the High Command as representing the general situation.

Von Haeften had drawn up a memorandum on behalf of the High Command. Its purpose was to drive home the truth that the German offensives in France and Flanders were not winning the War and that political action would have to supplement military action: "these victories," so the memorandum ran, "will not alone bring us peace; for that purpose we need a political victory behind the enemy fronts . . . such a result will not be achieved by our victorious offensive alone and without political support."

Von Kühlmann did not use the same military phraseology, but he said very much the same thing in more diplomatic language. It would be a mistake, he declared, to treat every offer or suggestion

of peace made by the enemy as no more than a trap, for peace must be preceded by some sort of discussion or exchange of ideas, for "the absolute end of the War can hardly be expected to come through a purely military decision alone and without any diplomatic negotiations."

To a House and to a public that had never doubted that Germany was winning the War these words were tragically sensational.

Naturally faith in the High Command was badly shaken. What were all the victories for if they led to this? Or could it be that these victories were not so real as they had seemed?

The High Command itself was outraged. It knew the War could no longer be won by fighting, but it did not want the public to know. It treated von Kühlmann's words as though they were a blow treacherously struck at itself. Von Kühlmann had to go. The Kaiser and Count Hertling were too weak to hold him against the annexationists and against the High Command. Now as before the resignation of Hindenburg and Ludendorff seemed a thing too dreadful to contemplate. Moreover, they had suddenly changed their views of the military situation, perhaps because there was, as yet, no big counter-offensive from the Allies.

A new German offensive was prepared. Von Kühlmann's successor, von Hintze, visited Lud-

endorff at Avesnes and asked him if he was certain that with the present offensive he would finally and definitely defeat the enemy? Ludendorff said, "My answer to that question is definitely yes" (Darauf antworte ich mit einem bestimmten Ja). The "Peace offensive" was, of course, completely wrecked.

The Germans began the attack on July 15th on both sides of Rheims and pushed forward across the Marne. But this time the Allies were prepared. They held their advanced positions very lightly, so that the German preliminary bombardment had little effect for all its intensity. Then, when the German troops marched forward they came under an intense artillery fire from the Allies and then encountered an unbroken and strongly held Allied line.

The Germans had to abandon their advance on the 17th. Their troops who had crossed the Marne were so hard pressed that they had to be withdrawn to the northern banks. This was the second time the Germans had been beaten on that river.

But the High Command did not give up hope and prepared for a new offensive by transferring troops from the front round Rheims to the Flemish front. It now determined to fight "the great decisive battle" in Flanders at last.

And then, suddenly, the Allies made their

counter-attack. A swarm of French tanks emerged from the forests of Château Thierry and broke into the German lines. The Germans, although reckoning with the possibility of an attack on this front, were taken by surprise in so far as they had not reckoned with the terrifying and destructive powers of the tank, a weapon they had under-estimated, although it had been used before. Yet even so, the Germans were able to rally and resist a breakthrough: but they had lost the initiative which had now passed from them to the Allies. Henceforth they were on the defensive.

The High Command had been badly scared, but as the German front held, they began to feel a little more confident that what it called "new deeds" might yet be done by the German army.

On August 8th the Allies attacked between Albert and Moreuil in a thick fog and with many tanks. The Germans were driven back some distance, but rallied and were just able to avoid disaster. All they could hope to do now was to parry Allied offensives, and there was no telling when the next blow would fall and whether it would not be disastrous.

Ludendorff called August 8th the "black day" of the War. He thought that if the British attack had been more skillful and less "schematic," as he called it, the Allies could have won "a great annihila-

tion battle" (Eine grosse Vernichtungsschlacht). "Belief in our victory," he wrote in a memorandum on October 31st, "which had begun to waver through the failure of our attack on July 15th, was finally lost."

The Kaiser, who was at Supreme Headquarters at Spa, was filled with dismay. What the military leaders found particularly disconcerting were the signs of demoralization amongst the German troops.

Too much, indeed, had been asked of them. Throughout four years they had fought with astonishing courage, endurance and skill against enemies far more numerous and far better equipped than themselves. One formidable enemy, Russia, had been overthrown, but another, equally formidable, the United States, had taken her place. They had no reserves left, either of men or of war material. They were starving and their families at home were starving too. They were so short of munitions that many of their batteries could only fire a few shells a day in reply to the avalanches of steel that were flung at them by the massed batteries of the Allies. Without reserves, they could have no periods of rest behind the lines. They no longer knew what they were fighting for. They had gone to war in defense of their country, but their leaders talked of conquest. Confidence in the Government that

did not know how to make peace was gone. Confidence in a High Command that spoilt so many chances of peace and, after so many victories, was not winning the War, was rapidly going. Between officers and men there had been a good deal of antagonism. At least the higher ranks showed little understanding for the point of view of the common soldier: he was good enough to fight, but not to enjoy equal political rights with those above him in the social hierarchy. At the bases, particularly in Belgium, officers were known to live in luxury with plenty of food, drink and women. Not that all or even very many officers were guilty of these things while the troops were starving, but they were common enough to stir up intense bitterness and, with the profiteering that went on at home, they began to create a growing conviction that there was profound inequality of sacrifice in the War. Little was done to stop these abuses and no understanding was shown for the so-called "demoralization" of the troops, which was caused not merely by blows of the Allies but also because there was no political and no moral leadership, but only military leadership in Germany.

Hindenburg had no conception of what was going on amongst the rank and file. To him "demoralization" was a form of cowardice and he

could think of no remedy except severe punishments.

German military discipline had always been very rigorous, although in one respect it was less so than British. The British soldier was not less courageous than the German, nevertheless the British military authorities thought it necessary to prevent what was called "cowardice and desertion in face of the enemy" by means of capital punishment. About 350 British soldiers were sentenced to death and executed for this offense. Two of the German sailors who took part in the so-called "naval mutinies" of 1917 were shot, but in the German army, although capital punishment existed on paper, it was rarely, if ever, carried out. Nevertheless, the discipline of the German troops remained unbroken until the end, when no penalties could any longer have saved it from breaking up. Indeed, just as the execution of the two sailors was more like a martyrdom than a punishment and helped to intensify rebellious feeling, executions amongst the troops in the summer of 1918 would merely have deepened and hardened the disaffection that was beginning to show itself.

Hindenburg, writing to the Minister of War, von Stein, that "cowardice and other grave offenses" were unfortunately "rather often the order of the day," declared that the punishment

known as "Anbinden," which had become obsolete, should be reintroduced in the German army. "Anbinden" was the equivalent of the British "Field Punishment Number 1," popularly known as "crucifixion"—the prisoner was tied to the wheel of a gun or of a cart at some spot where he could be seen by as many people as possible and so become a warning example.

The movement of the revolt was, little by little, acquiring the character of a strike. The men were downing tools, so to speak, because they wanted peace. At the same time the front line (once the first panics were over) was held with all the courage and skill the German soldiers had shown in four years of fighting. Like miners on strike who nevertheless do the work necessary to prevent the mines from flooding, so the German troops delayed the Allied advance (inflicting fearful losses right up to the end) while they settled their account with the authorities and rulers at home.

The High Command feared the worst, but did not tell the Kaiser or the political leaders so.

On August 13th and 14th there was a Crown Council at Spa, attended, amongst others, by the Kaiser, Hindenburg, and Ludendorff, the Imperial Chancellor, and the Foreign Secretary, von Hintze. Ludendorff, taking von Hintze aside, said that whereas in July he had been certain that the

German offensive would "break" the "war-will" of the enemy, he was now no longer certain, although he was still confident that the Germans would gradually "tire out the war-will of the enemy by means of a strategic defensive." Ludendorff, even now, was not willing to accept the complete independence and territorial integrity of Belgium, so that any peace offer he might suggest was predoomed to failure.

According to the protocol of the meeting on August 14th, Hindenburg "hopes that we shall nevertheless succeed in maintaining a stand on French soil and thereby in the end impress our will upon the enemy." But Ludendorff altered the version with his pencil, changing "hopes" (hofft) to "states" (fuhrt aus), and deleting "nevertheless" (dennoch), thus making Hindenburg "*state* that we *shall* succeed" and so on. It is therefore clear that Hindenburg was the more realistic or the franker of the two in this conference—probably the latter, for Ludendorff knew the situation to be far worse than he would admit, as is evident from his own Memoirs and from the findings of the "Committee of Inquiry into the Causes of Defeat," that was formed after the War.

The Crown Council had no result except to bolster up the belief that Germany might still win the War. But von Hintze was very uneasy and

told the Chancellor he would resign if no peace terms were offered. The weary Chancellor replied, "But do let an old man like me go first" (aber dann lassen Sie mich alten Mann doch lieber zuerst gehen). The Chancellor thought the right time for a peace offer would be when the military situation on the Western front had improved, and with this opinion Hindenburg and Ludendorff agreed, that is to say, they no longer thought that peace was such an urgent matter.

The Austrians were in a desperate plight and the High Command had to face the fact that if the War was to be continued, the Germans might have to continue it alone. Von Hintze, even if he may have accepted the High Command's renewed belief in victory, realized that this victory would have to be absolute if the Germans were not ready to respect the sovereignty of Belgium. On August 25th the Vice-Chancellor, von Payer, went to see Hindenburg and Ludendorff at Avesnes, taking with him a statement in which the Government would proclaim Germany's resolve to surrender Belgium "without imposition (Belastung) and reservation" as soon as peace were concluded, provided that no other Power were to acquire a position that would give it a military, political or economic preponderance over the German Empire in Belgium.

Ludendorff, as usual, spoke on behalf of the High Command, Hindenburg having very little to say. Ludendorff wished to amplify the proposed statement by making it "firmer in tone," by adding a reservation in favor of the Flemings (whom the Germans had been inciting against the Belgian Government), a few polemical words against England, as well as the demand that Germany should have her colonies back and that England should surrender Calais.

Why Ludendorff imagined that the English wanted to keep the French port of Calais for themselves is a mystery. The idea was, of course, completely absurd and a peace offer embodying such a proposal would expose the German Government to general ridicule. Hindenburg does not seem to have expressed any political opinion—apart from general agreement with Ludendorff—and as for the military situation, he said the Germans might have to withdraw here and there, but that they would not give way on the Western front as a whole.

The statement finally agreed upon between Ludendorff and the Government (he and the Government negotiated with one another as though they were two independent Powers and Ludendorff the greater of the two) was a compromise. Ludendorff's suggestions were adopted in part and made

more tentative and general. The compromise was still rather petulantly aggressive in tone, particularly against England.

The Austrians were getting impatient. Both their political and military leaders had all along shown much more realism than the Germans. They now—on August 30th—threatened to conclude a separate peace. But they were dissuaded and the German High Command continued to express confidence in the military situation.

The German Government, the Austrian Government, and the German High Command did not understand one another at all. They were three different entities who seemed incapable of collaboration. The Kaiser might have brought them together, but he was too weak, too easily influenced, too temperamental, and too ignorant of what was really happening. He wavered irresolutely between hope and fear. Whenever he was with Hindenburg and Ludendorff his courage rose. Any hint that all might not be well upset him so much that such hints were kept from him. Whenever he was left alone he was tormented by doubt. On September 2nd the British pushed the Germans back a little between Arras and Cambrai. It was a relatively unimportant action and Hindenburg had foretold that such withdrawals could be expected without great anxiety. But when the

Kaiser William II, Ludendorff, and Hindenburg Conferring at General Headquarters in 1917

Kaiser heard of it he was thrown into such a state of excitement and depression that he nearly had a nervous collapse.

The Chancellor, too, began to feel uneasy. On September 3rd he wrote to Hindenburg asking him how things stood. Hindenburg did not bother to reply at first. And then, more than three weeks later, he sent the Chancellor a brief note, saying that such things could better be discussed verbally.

But the Austrians would not be put off. "We are absolutely at the end of our tether" (bei uns ist absolut Schluss), so Count Burian, the Austrian Chancellor, told the German Government. The Bulgarians were in the same plight, and Tsar Ferdinand, who was taking a cure at Nauheim, told the Kaiser that the Balkan front was on the point of collapsing. Uneasiness spread wide and deep in Germany too. Faith in the military leaders was being shaken more and more. And yet the High Command remained, or pretended to remain, confident, either delaying or spoiling any attempt to make peace.

Meanwhile the Allies were getting more confident, and as the days went by, Germany's chances of securing a reasonable peace diminished.

On September 14th the Austrians sued for a general peace, but it was too late. Reënforcements were sent to Bulgaria, but it was too late. The

Bulgarians collapsed and asked for an armistice. And all the time the Allies were pressing forward. The Americans were fighting big battles and the Germans at last realized that the United States was a great military power.

Ludendorff began to lose his nerve. He, who had been so determined and so steady, began to show signs of mental incoherence and excitability. Even Hindenburg's calm failed to hold him. Hindenburg himself grew very uneasy. It was the growing indiscipline of the German troops that worried him most. Troops returning from leave or resting at the bases were beginning to shout "Strike-breakers!" at troops going up the line. Hindenburg's attempt to reintroduce "crucifixion" seemed to have made no difference at all. Officers and N.C.O.'s also began to lose heart, and on September 26th Hindenburg wrote a memorandum, saying that the diminished "fighting power" of the men was "largely" caused by slackness on the part of those in charge of them. He recommended several remedies, especially better comradeship, more self-control, a greater sense of duty, rank and honor.

The Government was fast losing faith in Ludendorff. He seemed quite helpless in the face of the attacks made by the Allies. As a matter of fact, he now knew that the War was lost. But he would

not say so and, by his silence, he kept up the fatal confidence of Count Hertling, the aged Chancellor. His own honest opinion was revealed later in several letters and minutes of conversations with those who knew him well. Early in September, for example, Colonel von Hertz asked Ludendorff, who had just described the military situation in the blackest terms, why he had kept this knowledge to himself. Ludendorff replied: "The Foreign Office is always in a state of fear whatever happens (sowieso), and if it were to learn what the military situation is really like, then there would be a catastrophe."

It was as though Ludendorff knew defeat was at hand and yet could not bring himself to accept this reality. In the words of one of his collaborators, he "clung to straws," and when there was an outbreak of pulmonary disease in France, he began to hope that the French front would collapse.

But he could not go on playing with vain hopes, for the Allies might break through the German lines at any moment. Ludendorff had to face this fact and he had to confess it to the Government. He pulled himself together, and on September 29th he astonished and dismayed the Foreign Secretary, von Hintze, by declaring in Hindenburg's presence that an immediate armistice was necessary.

To ask for an armistice was to admit defeat, and

indeed to accept defeat, for it was obvious that the Allies, now clearly victorious, would not grant an armistice that would allow the Germans to recuperate.

Von Hintze then explained to the two commanders that there were going to be some political changes in Germany. There would be a popular Government which the Kaiser himself would call into being. Some of the more prominent "parliamentary leaders" would be members of it—presumably one or two Socialists would be included, an idea the Chancellor, Count Hertling, had repudiated with horror only a few weeks before. This procedure was called "the Revolution from above"—its purpose was, of course, to avert the real Revolution, the "Revolution from below." Such a Government would then offer peace and, if peace were rejected by the Allies, they would find in Germany a united nation fighting on for its own existence.

Ludendorff agreed, but insisted on his demand for an immediate armistice—to form a new Government would take time, to offer peace would take more time, whereas at any moment the Allies might win "the great decisive battle" and be in a position to impose their peace upon the Germans. Ludendorff was therefore willing to agree to anything as long as the Government would secure the

armistice. At this point Hindenburg made a political proposal—Germany, he said, ought to annex the great French mining districts of Briey and Longwy. This was too much even for Ludendorff, who interrupted Hindenburg with the words "The time for that has gone" (dazu ist nicht mehr die Zeit). This is the first recorded disagreement between the two commanders.

A conference with the Kaiser followed. Hindenburg and Ludendorff repeated their demand for an armistice. The Kaiser was dumbfounded. The Chancellor arrived soon afterwards, and when he heard what had happened he too was overwhelmed with dismay.

Both the Kaiser and the Chancellor knew that Germany had lost the War.

CHAPTER X

THE ARMISTICE

HINDENBURG and Ludendorff had their way, and on that same 29th of September telegrams were sent to Vienna and Constantinople instructing the German Ambassadors to inform the Austrian and Turkish Governments confidentially that the German Imperial Government proposed to offer President Wilson a peace based on his Fourteen Points, while demanding "an immediate armistice."

The words "immediate armistice" revealed Germany's true position to her Allies. (Bulgaria, who had already collapsed, was, for the time being, left uninformed.) It was a momentous, irrevocable thing that the Imperial Government had done.

New Governments take some time to form, and in Germany's confused and desperate situation, with political emotions running very high, it was extremely difficult to select a new Cabinet that would satisfy every one, or rather that would dissatisfy as few as possible. And yet, speed was essential if the new Government was to end the War—indeed, it was chiefly for this purpose that it was being formed.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff did not seem to

understand why there should be such delay. Ludendorff was for exercising pressure (dass wir darauf drücken) to make "the gentlemen in Berlin hurry up and agree." At 1 P.M. on September 30th he asked von Lersner, the representative of the Foreign Office at General Headquarters, to transmit the "urgent request that our peace offer may be dispatched at once. The troops will hold out to-day, but what will happen to-morrow?" At 1.30 Hindenburg wired to Berlin that if the new Government could be formed by seven or eight o'clock that same evening, he would agree to a postponement of the request for an armistice until the following noon; but if there were the slightest doubt that the new Government would be formed, then the request for an armistice ought to be dispatched that same evening.

At 2 P.M., von Grünau, who acted as intermediary between the Foreign Office and the Kaiser, and was then staying at Supreme Headquarters, wired to Berlin that Ludendorff wanted peace to be offered at once, because he thought the enemy might break through the German front at any moment. "It is my impression," von Grünau wired, "that people here (that is, at Headquarters) have lost their nerve completely." Ludendorff seemed unable to control his impatience and his anxiety, and he again told von Lersner that the peace offer

must be dispatched at once, for "the army could not wait another forty-eight hours."

The effect of their panicky appeals and demands upon the political leaders was altogether devastating. They knew things had been going badly, they had come to realize that there would be no German victory, but they had not reckoned with defeat, least of all with a defeat as catastrophic and absolute as Hindenburg and Ludendorff were now fearing. It had been a shock to them when they realized that the German victories of March, April and June were barren victories, and that the German line could no more than be held, but—after the assurances given by Hindenburg and Ludendorff—they had confidence that it would at least be held. But now, and all of a sudden, they were informed on the highest possible authority that the line which had remained unbroken for more than four years might be broken and overrun at any moment. They also knew that by demanding an immediate armistice the German Empire would be hoisting the white flag of surrender.

Prince Max of Baden was asked to form the new Government. He was a General and an aristocrat. But he was also a Liberal. He had friends in all countries. He had done much for prisoners of war. He believed in a constitutional monarchy and in the principles of President Wilson.

He arrived in Berlin on October 1st. He refused to ask the Allies for an armistice all at once, and he was not convinced that things were as bad as Hindenburg and Ludendorff made out. For the first time there was some one in Berlin who not only stood up to the High Command, but also could not be moved by threats of resignation. To threaten resignation now, just because Prince Max had ideas other than those of the High Command about making peace, would have delayed the formation of the new Government; it might also have delayed the request for an armistice, and, in any case, to resign in the hour of supreme danger would have been a betrayal. And, indeed, there is no reason for supposing that Hindenburg and Ludendorff planned such a thing. Only its impossibility robbed them of their accustomed means of making the Government do what they wanted. Ludendorff's dislike of Prince Max was intense. "He rebelled against taking the brutal realities into account . . . he saw nothing but the sudden importunity of the High Command," so Ludendorff wrote of the Prince, although its "importunity" was about all the High Command would let him see, for it kept on sending telegram on telegram to Berlin, demanding an immediate armistice and saying no word about the military situation except that it was desperate. The Prince was left unin-

formed as to why they thought it so desperate. He was willing to offer peace at once, but an armistice only if the Allies gave a favorable reply.

But the Kaiser supported the High Command and authorized the request for an immediate armistice. Even so, the Prince, having become Chancellor in the new Government, refused to act until he had satisfied himself that the danger was as great as Ludendorff seemed to think. So he sent a series of questions, not to Ludendorff but to Hindenburg. They had to be answered—there could no longer be any evasion. And, indeed, it turned out to be as the Prince had suspected. The situation was bad, but not so bad as he had been told. Hindenburg replied that the German army was being forced to retire slowly, but that it might be able to keep the enemy off German soil until the following spring. "I do not," wrote the Field-Marshal, "believe in a general collapse." But he still thought it was necessary to sue for peace (he referred back to a previous letter of his, though one in which he used the word "peace" but not "armistice"). In one of his questions the Prince asked Hindenburg if he realized that a peace conducted under pressure of the Allied armies might mean the loss of the German colonies, of Alsace Lorraine, and of the Polish-speaking districts of Eastern Germany. Hindenburg replied that the

High Command "would, if there were no other possibility, consider the surrender of small French-speaking parts of Alsace Lorraine," but not "the cession of German districts in the East." Hindenburg wrote no word about indiscipline in the army. Indeed, there seemed to be a recovery in the morale of the German troops.

In a discussion with the Prince and with Count Roedern, the Secretary of the Treasury, Hindenburg gave a more detailed verbal reply, although not one that was any more precise than his written answers. If the enemy were to put forward "sharper terms," then, he said, "we shall fight to the last man." Count Roedern replied that while this might be the attitude of a commander in the field, it could not be the attitude of a statesman: "a battalion in an advanced position" might conceivably "fight to the last man," but not a "nation of sixty-five million inhabitants." Indeed, he even doubted whether an army of one million could "fight to the last man."

Prince Max's plan was to outline a peace program in his first speech before the Reichstag. A peace offer to the Allies would follow, and—if the Allies proved to be reasonable—an armistice could be arranged. He felt all the more able to proceed with careful deliberation as Hindenburg's replies had reassured him about the state of the army.

But Ludendorff continued to insist. No doubt what Hindenburg had said was quite true, he admitted, but the Allies might attack in force at any moment, and then there was no telling what might happen. He and Hindenburg absolutely refused to relax their pressure on the Government—again and again they demanded "an immediate armistice." And at last the Government gave way.

At ten minutes past one on the morning of October 4th a telegram was sent to President Wilson via Berne, offering peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points, and asking for "the immediate conclusion of an armistice on land, on the sea, and in the air."

The German public had recently had another shock. The news of Bulgaria's collapse (which meant the collapse of the whole Balkan front) had been kept back by the German Government, but it was revealed by the Socialist newspaper *Vorwaerts* on September 28th, and now the request for an armistice quickly corroborated the growing disillusionment. The German public at last knew that the War was lost. Two or three months ago it still believed in Victory—victorious war crowning four years of victorious battles—but now defeat had come. In the general revulsion the prestige of the High Command, of Hindenburg and

Ludendorff, of the German officer class, of German arms, of the Kaiser, of the whole Imperial "authoritarian" state, already badly shaken, began to founder altogether. One faith was going; two others were taking its place: faith in the Socialist Party at home and in President Wilson abroad. And it would not be long before these faiths, too, would founder.

The Allies continued their attacks all along the Western front. The Germans withdrew systematically and in good order, inflicting heavy losses to the last.

These attacks made the High Command all the more impatient. But President Wilson was in no great hurry to reply. On October 8th he informed the German Government that there could be no armistice as long as German troops were on the territory of the Allied Powers. He also asked the Chancellor if he did not speak on behalf of those who had been responsible for the conduct of the War until now—by this astute question President Wilson pushed home what had all along been the chief item of Allied propaganda, namely that the War had been deliberately sprung upon an unsuspecting world by Germany's rulers, particularly by the Kaiser, and that with them there could be no peace, but only with the German people, or a Government representing the German people.

President Wilson thus helped to widen the growing cleft between the German people and its leaders. He stimulated the belief that the Allies would be more likely to offer peace if the Kaiser were got rid of. The President thus helped to encourage German disunity, and he did not a little to promote the overthrow of the monarchy.

On the 9th the High Command agreed to the evacuation of the occupied territories, and said that it could be done in two or three months by systematic withdrawals. The German frontiers could then be held, although German towns would be menaced by attack from the air. But now, as before, the High Command insisted upon an immediate armistice because the enemy might break through at any moment.

A German reply to President Wilson was drawn up and submitted to the High Command. "I and General Ludendorff agree . . . to the wording of the reply to Wilson," so Hindenburg wired to the Prince on the 12th. The reply was dispatched that same day. The German Government agreed to the evacuation, it again asked for peace on the basis of the Fourteen Points, and declared itself to be representative of the German people.

The High Command continued to bombard

Berlin with telegrams and telephone calls insisting on an "immediate armistice."

It was with great concern and, apparently, surprise, that the High Command heard of a certain depression amongst the German people at home. On October 14th Hindenburg wired to the Chancellor that German "disunity and despairing mood" were encouraging the enemy very much, and that both the enemy and the neutrals were beginning to look upon the Germans as "no longer a people who most joyfully sacrifices all for its honor." He urged that a spirit of unity and patriotism be fostered, that the terrible consequences of an unjust peace be made clear to all, and that there could only be two alternatives: "an honorable peace or a fight to a finish."

Apparently Hindenburg came to be satisfied by the efforts made to improve the "spirit on the home front," for on the 18th he sent a circular letter to the German army commanders, impressing them that "our united front at home (im Innern) can now be regarded as secured."

There had been some indiscipline in the German army hitherto, though nothing as serious as the mutinies in the French army in 1917, and there had been big strikes in Germany. But there had so far been no "revolution from below." The German Revolution did not break out until November

—it reached Berlin on the 9th. This is extremely important, because afterwards the legend grew up —and it was adopted by all the sympathizers with the old régime, by the military leaders, and by the conservative parties—that the German army was winning the War, but that in the moment of victory it was "stabbed in the back" by the Revolution.

Germany lost the War when her great offensives in the spring and summer of the year 1918 had failed. Before they began, Ludendorff had realized and had said that their failure would mean that all was lost. By insisting on an "immediate armistice" he and Hindenburg not only admitted but proclaimed Germany's defeat. By declaring that the troops could retire systematically and would be able to hold the German frontiers, they acknowledged that the army was not disintegrating in a revolutionary sense (as the Russian army had disintegrated the year before). By declaring that the enemy might break through—thus consummating Germany's military defeat by military means—Hindenburg himself acknowledged that the "home front" could be considered secure. The legend of the "stab in the back" is therefore refuted not only by the facts but also by the testimony of the two highest possible authorities. Ludendorff, to clear his own reputation, did much to promote the

legend. But Hindenburg never did—he allowed the facts to speak for themselves.

The Allies failed to break through. It would also seem that Ludendorff was beginning to realize the full significance of what he had done when he demanded an "immediate armistice." He gradually began to think that the situation was not so desperate after all, and told the Government so. The Government, which had sued for an armistice only because Hindenburg and Ludendorff had said it was absolutely necessary to avert a collapse of the Western front (of which possibility they were surely the most competent judges), now learnt that it had all been a mistake.

For every one the events of the last few weeks were unimaginably momentous, for they heralded the end of the War. Peace talk had begun, and everywhere—though most of all in Germany and Austria—peace was coming to mean far more than victory. The Austrians were determined on peace at any price, and the Germans were rapidly coming to this determination. That the peace would be a hard one had been clear from the moment the German request for an armistice had been sent out, and Prince Max himself left the High Command in no doubt about this at the time.

But now, just because the High Command was

a little more optimistic, the War would perhaps have to go on, for another winter perhaps, or until the following spring or summer. Or the Allies might attack with redoubled force. Might not the "break-through" feared by the High Command take place at any moment, after all? It had not taken place until now, but it was just as likely as before, seeing that the relative strengths of the two opposing armies steadily changed, to the disadvantage of Germany. Or what if the High Command's optimism were suddenly turned into pessimism again?

The German Government was in a dreadful predicament, while the German High Command was trying to make up its own mind, and the German people, with confidence in their Kaiser, their political and military leaders, rapidly diminishing, demanded peace. Feeling against the Kaiser in particular grew very strong, and it became necessary to consider his abdication.

A Commission was formed to study the terms of the armistice that was now expected. The Commission received a number of directives from a memorandum drawn up by Hindenburg. They are of considerable interest, because they show his —and, of course, Ludendorff's—verdict on the military situation towards the end of October, 1918 (the draft of this memorandum is dated October

23rd, and is signed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff, but the final version is signed "von Hindenburg" only).

"The military situation is such," so the memorandum runs, "that the strength of the army in the field is no longer enough to be *sure* of holding its position . . . the relative strength of the army is changed continuously to our disadvantage. The possibility of securing definite peace terms by continuing the fight against the American-Franco-British Army therefore no longer exists. . . . Nevertheless we must, of course, be prepared to resume the fighting in case terms are put that would destroy our future."

Hindenburg seemed to think that if the French and British insisted on such terms, the Americans would drop out of the War, in which case he thought Germany would be able to carry on the struggle: "The fight against the Franco-British Army is by no means hopeless, especially if Belgium also fails, and the War is limited to the German-French frontier again."

This passage—which reveals a rather curious view of the relations between the Americans, British, French, and Belgians—again shows that the Germans—in the opinion of the High Command—were being defeated not by Revolution at home, but by the superior military strength of the enemy.

In this same memorandum Hindenburg also points out that Germany had accepted President Wilson's Fourteen Points without knowing anything about the way they would be interpreted, and that she would not know until her armies had retired to her own frontiers. The fighting, he added, would have to cease first, then the evacuation could be arranged, and finally the terms of the "armistice on the German Western frontier." He did not realize, although Wilson in his second note had said that there could be no armistice that would diminish the military preponderance of the Allied and associated Powers in the field, that Germany was to be disarmed, and at once.

Had the German armies been allowed to withdraw to their frontiers, they would not only have had a respite from the terrible fighting of those October days, but would also have been on a shortened front and with shortened lines of communication. To effect such a retirement would be the equivalent of a big strategic success immensely increasing the relative strength of the German army. It is hard to understand why the German High Command did not realize that the enemy could not, for military reasons alone, allow such a thing to happen.

Wilson's third note, which arrived on the 24th, removed whatever uncertainty there may have been.

It bluntly stated that there could be no armistice that would permit Germany to renew the War. In other words, Germany was to be disarmed there and then, or else the War would go on. This was the logical consequence of the request not for peace but for an "immediate armistice."

It meant surrender, and if the "Fourteen Points" were interpreted to Germany's disadvantage (as indeed they were, and very much so), or even if they were simply brushed aside, then Germany would be wholly unable to resist, and could not even offer the resistance Hindenburg thought she would, if the worst happened, be able to offer along her own frontiers.

Hindenburg understood at last. For him it was a blow that deeply affected him as a soldier. And he did what is perhaps the only impulsive thing he is ever known to have done. On the evening of that same day—the 24th—he wired to his generals that Wilson's reply "demands military capitulation. It is therefore unacceptable for us soldiers. It proves that our enemies' determination to destroy us, which started the War in 1914, persists unabated. . . . For us soldiers Wilson's reply can therefore only be the call to continue our resistance to the utmost of our strength. If our enemies recognize that, no matter what the sacrifice, the German front cannot be broken through, they will

be ready for a peace that will just secure Germany's future for the broad masses of the people."

This telegram was an act of indiscipline in so far as it called for action of the most far-reaching political consequence without the authorization of the Kaiser or of the Government. Whether Hindenburg thought better of it, or whether other commanders intervened, is not clear. But the telegram was held up the next day, although not until it had reached some of the generals to whom it was addressed. Ludendorff, who had approved of the telegram before it was dispatched, declared later on that he did not know it was contrary to the wishes or policy of the Government.

Hindenburg's message seemed to imply that resistance was possible, that the enemy could, after all, be prevented from "breaking through" the German lines. Whether this was his own opinion and not Ludendorff's, or whether it was merely a subjective feeling aroused by a soldierly revolt against the prospect of what he considered national dishonor, remains obscure. In his Memoirs Hindenburg himself reveals almost nothing of what he really felt in those momentous days.

In any case, both Hindenburg and Ludendorff were shaken into a new attitude by the realities of the situation. They now declared that while an armistice was still necessary, it could wait just a

little. Ludendorff quibbled on the words "*sofort*" and "*unverzüglich.*" These two words have so nearly the same meaning that they can both be translated by "immediate": literally they mean "at once" and "without delay," so that there is really no difference between them.

But when Hindenburg and Ludendorff were asked why they thought the chances of resistance were better now than they had been a few days previously, they replied that the German army *must not* capitulate, that it still stood victorious on enemy soil, that there was a great longing for peace in England, that internal disorders were to be expected in France. A short while ago Ludendorff had said a "levée en masse" would have been useless, but now it was demanded by him and Hindenburg.

It may be that they were right in so far as the German army could perhaps have held an unbroken front for some months longer, perhaps even until the following spring. The pursuit of the retreating German armies, who fought with their usual courage and deadly efficiency, was becoming more and more difficult, for roads, railways, bridges were destroyed, so the advance would have been slow in any case. The Germans might perhaps have secured some pledges and guarantees more definite than the Fourteen Points or draft peace terms

based upon them, after which an armistice could have been arranged. But by insisting on an "immediate armistice," as well as peace, the High Command had, against the wishes of the Government, committed Germany to a course that was overprecipitate. An armistice had been asked for, it was now offered. If it were refused, then there was no telling when peace could be discussed.

If the War went on, the Allies and associated Powers might, if the German resistance were formidable enough, rather make peace than prolong the War and deepen the discontent at home. But it is also possible that they would fight on, and, with their immensely superior reserves, break through the German front—perhaps not until the following spring—invade German soil, destroy German towns by bombing and bombarding them, and impose terms upon a demoralized and helpless enemy.

But the demand for an "immediate armistice" had predetermined events. There could be no going back on this. Even if the generals had all received Hindenburg's telegram, and had ordered resistance to the utmost, they would not have had the support of the Government, of the civilian population, or even of their own men. There was a good deal still to be saved—there was, as later events showed, the Rhineland to be saved—and the

German people were determined to save that little at least and not imperil anything by action that might wreck all chances of a not too intolerable peace.

Doubts as to whether the opinion of Hindenburg and Ludendorff was really so infallible as had once been believed made the Government wish to consult the other German generals. But Hindenburg thought it would be better not to do so. Ludendorff rejected the suggestion peremptorily.

Almost all faith in Hindenburg and Ludendorff disappeared. Von Lersner, the representative of the Foreign Office at Supreme Headquarters, informed Berlin that the High Command was "very wild" and insisted on a rejection of Wilson's offer of an armistice. He "most urgently" warned the Government "on the score of his many years' experience at Headquarters against having any faith in any promise the High Command might make," and against allowing any deviation from the peace policy that had now been started. The military situation, he added, was just as hopeless now as it had been three weeks ago, and it was a matter of weeks or "of a few months at the most" before the enemy would be on German soil.

Von Lersner informed the Government that a change in the High Command would be well received by the greater part of the army, as "con-

fidence in the present High Command was gone." Little was left of Hindenburg's prestige either at home or at the front.

The Government went its own way, despite the importunities of the High Command. On October 27th it asked President Wilson for the terms of the armistice that was now to be arranged.

Ludendorff had meant to resign on the previous day. But Hindenburg happened to see the letter of resignation, and asked him not to send it off. Ludendorff—as he himself relates in a memorandum he drew up on October 31st—took Hindenburg's advice very reluctantly. The two commanders had an audience with the Kaiser. Ludendorff had "the painful impression" that he no longer enjoyed "his Majesty's confidence." He therefore sent in his resignation after all. Hindenburg wanted to resign as well, but the Kaiser persuaded him to remain. Ludendorff was replaced by General Groener, who, in after years, became Minister of War in the German Republic.

And so that strange and fateful partnership came to an end. It had been extraordinarily harmonious. No real difference between the views of the two commanders is recorded except when, in those days of imminent defeat, Hindenburg suggested the annexation of the Longwy-Briey coal basis, and Ludendorff brushed the suggestion aside.

Both commanders had their special strength and special abilities—these were doubled by the partnership. Both had weaknesses—these, too, were doubled, and fatally so. It would have been different if they had not stood quite alone. But after the resignation of Bethmann Hollweg, and until Prince Max of Baden took office, there was no statesman who carried any weight with them. Even Bethmann Hollweg and the Prince were handicapped, for the heroic legend that grew up around Hindenburg's name and was continually being stimulated by tremendous and yet empty victories made his position so strong that a Chancellor more resolute and resourceful even than Bethmann Hollweg would have had great difficulty in holding his own against him. It would have been different had the Kaiser been a bigger man. He had certain qualities—a prodigious memory, a lively imagination, and a gift for vivid rhetoric. He was also capable of great charm. But he was governed by moods and was easily influenced. He also had a certain versatile superficiality, though that was perhaps as much the fault of his environment as his own, for he was never confronted with the reality until it was too late, and it is surely a great wrong that was done him by many of those with whom he associated that they surrounded him with flattery and obsequiousness and never told

him the truths they were so willing to impart to the world after he had fallen. Had he been a man of steady intelligence and calm resolution, he could have redressed the overbalance that made it difficult for the political leaders and easy for the military leaders to determine the conduct of the War. Ultimately the fault perhaps lay with the German system that gave the officer a privileged position. The officer had a special and peculiar code of honor; when he walked in the street in his bright uniform he was no ordinary person. Many an incident—the famous incident at Zabern, for example—showed that he was considered rather superior to the civilian. There was, it is true, a considerable hostility towards the officer class, and in Germany before the War no one was ridiculed and caricatured so much as the officer, the military commander, and even the Kaiser himself. No doubt, if the War had not come, what is sometimes known as "Prussian militarism" would have faded away, and politically too, though not becoming a Republic, the German Empire would have gone through reforms analogous to those which in October, 1918, were carried out under pressure of defeat and revolution, reforms that would have made the Empire a constitutional monarchy like the British. It was the War itself, the fear of invasion from East and West, and the long series

of victories that gave the officers' corps and especially Hindenburg and Ludendorff such a fatal ascendancy.

Now that the end was approaching, Hindenburg, robbed of his great collaborator, stood alone in circumstances that were as full of irony as they were of tragedy, for while victory had vanished beyond recovery, yet surrender, though as good as accomplished and practically inevitable, was now revealed by events not to have been necessary. The Germans retreated so swiftly, so skillfully, and with such deadly rear-guard actions, that they eluded the annihilation that Hindenburg and Ludendorff had believed imminent. When the Germans reached the Antwerp-Meuse line it was becoming clear that it would have taken weeks before their enemies could even engage them in a big battle. To end the War by fighting would have needed at least one more great offensive by the Allied and Associated Powers, and this might have been impossible until the spring of 1919.

No doubt it was better for Europe as a whole, and ultimately for Germany, that the War came to an end then. Indeed, even if by holding out Germany had secured better terms—and it is not at all sure that she would not have secured worse terms—another winter of war and starvation would surely have far outweighed any advantages that

might have been secured by prolonged resistance. And, after all, the War was destroying the civilization and happiness of all Europe, and the supreme necessity of the day, indeed of the hour, was that it should stop. In all the belligerent countries there were some who wanted it to go on, but the vague and problematic gains of further fighting could not have compensated any one of these countries for the sure loss inflicted on all by even a single day of fighting, still less by the desolation that another war winter would have brought about.

But for Hindenburg, whose thoughts were dominated by military conceptions, it must have been infinitely mortifying to realize that the white flag of surrender which had been hoisted because he and Ludendorff had insisted, need not have been hoisted for weeks or even months to come, or possibly even not at all. And it was the more ironical because it had been the military commanders, himself and Ludendorff, who had wanted surrender, while the despised politicians had wanted the fighting to go on.

CHAPTER XI

THE REVOLUTION

TOWARDS the end of October there was another act of indiscipline analogous to Hindenburg's when he called upon his generals to resist the armistice, only one that had the most momentous consequences. Without the knowledge of the Government the naval command was planning an attack in force on the British fleet. This attack was quite insane. It is true that in the Jutland battle the Germans showed how formidable the fleet could be. But the losses of the British in this battle were due partly to a faulty disposition of the British fleet, partly to low visibility that eliminated the advantage given to the British by the longer range of their guns, and very largely to technical defects both in the British ships and in their projectiles—thus, the fire caused by an exploding German shell in a British gun-turret would spread to the magazine through the ammunition hoist, which in German ships was automatically closed, and, again, German shells would pierce the armour plating and explode inside the British vessel, sometimes sending it to the bottom in a few minutes, while British shells usually exploded on contact, doing very little real damage to the Ger-

man ship. But these were defects that could be made good, and, indeed, they were made good by the British soon after the battle. The disadvantages of the German fleet—lower speed and smaller range—could not be made good so quickly. Thus, in October, 1918, the real strength of the British fleet was relatively far greater than it was at Jutland. Besides, it was reënforced by a number of American vessels.

The German Grand Fleet, which was to engage the British off the Straits of Dover, would therefore have simply run into destruction, especially as the British were rarely taken by surprise, and the German fleet could not have steamed so far into British waters without alarming the British fleet to concentrate for battle.

As a matter of fact, the German admirals reckoned with the possibility of complete annihilation, but this they thought would be a glorious end. They preferred going down with colors flying to what they considered ignoble surrender. Had the action taken place, it would probably have wrecked the negotiations for an armistice. It might thus have cost Germany not only the loss of tens of thousands of her seamen, but Europe another winter of war.

Orders to put to sea and engage the British fleet were given on October 28th. But the German

sailors, already exasperated by bullying and injustice that seem to have been commoner in the German navy than in the Germany army, had begun to realize what was intended. They were ready to fight if necessary, but they were not willing to die just because their officers had peculiar ideas about honor, and least of all were they willing to wreck the peace that now seemed imminent.

They refused to obey orders. The stokers drew their fires. Red flags went up on the mastheads. The German Revolution had begun. It spread to Kiel, from there to other ports, and then to Berlin. Sailors and workmen—soon to be joined by soldiers—marched through the streets everywhere, waving red flags and singing the Internationale. On November 9th the German Republic was proclaimed by the Socialist leader Scheidemann, from a balustrade of the Parliament building in Berlin.

Prince Max of Baden had set himself a threefold task—to terminate the War, to avert the Revolution, and to save the monarchy. The War was now coming to an end, though not in the way he would have wished. The revolutionary movement derived its main impulse from the War itself, and the longer the War went on the greater grew the hatred of a governing class, of the High Command and of the Kaiser, who prolonged the War merely for the sake of conquest. The only war aims that

seemed worthy of any respect were those claimed by President Wilson. Germany, it is true, had proclaimed the War to be one of self-defense, but her victories stimulated the desire for conquest. Even after her defeat was certain, some of her leading politicians, and even Hindenburg himself, continued to demand annexation at the expense of her enemies. And in any case, the Peace of Brest-Litovsk was one of conquest (those Germans who most loudly applauded the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, or even thought it too moderate, were precisely those who were most outraged by the Peace of Versailles, which inflicted a far smaller territorial mutilation upon Germany than she had inflicted upon Russia). The German people saw no way out of the War that was destroying them except the Fourteen Points. German statesmanship entirely failed to develop a clear program that could vie with these Points even in its own country. And, indeed, every other way out had been either allowed to silt up by the weakness and disingenuousness of politicians like Michaelis or by the continual and disastrous interference of the High Command.

That, too, was why there could be no *levée en masse*. Not that it would have been much use in a military sense (in 1871 von Moltke had been contemptuous even of the relatively formidable French

levée en masse), but Walther Rathenau and others who were for it seemed to think that a last desperate fight of the German people—perhaps even with women and children going into the line—would appeal to the more chivalrous, or at least more moderate, instincts of the enemy, and give greater strength to the peace movement in England, France and America. But a *levée en masse* against what? Against the armistice for which the German Government and the High Command had asked? Or against the Wilsonian Peace which had been offered? A *levée en masse* needs immense public enthusiasm and self-sacrifice. There was no enthusiasm in Germany for such aims. Nothing really mattered any longer, except peace. By suing for an armistice and for peace at the same time, the German Government had created a situation in which to reject the armistice would have been to reject the peace, the Wilsonian Peace. And this the German people would not do. It is of the highest significance that the German naval mutinies of 1918 were precipitated by an attempt to make the War culminate in a great naval engagement that would probably have wrecked the armistice and therefore the peace. No doubt if Hindenburg's telegram calling upon the generals to resist the armistice had gone its way and had created the rally it was meant to create, the German soldiers

would have replied in the same way as the German sailors had done. It is perhaps a mere accident that it was the admirals and not the generals who precipitated the German Revolution. To say that the Revolution stabbed German Victory in the back and turned her into Defeat is a misreading of history. It would be more true to say that the German Revolution saved Peace from being stabbed in the back by the German commanders. The stokers who drew the fires on the battleships at Kiel in 1918 may well have averted another winter of war, and by so doing they earned the gratitude not only of their own country but of all Europe.

Prince Max was thus thwarted by events altogether beyond his control (he had no knowledge that the admirals planned a great naval battle) from averting the Revolution. He believed that parliamentary reform would ease the political strain, and no doubt he was right, except that these reforms were rather belated. He also believed that the abdication of the Kaiser would bring relief. Against the Kaiser, as a symbol of Imperial Germany, and of what was called "German militarism," there was an intense and growing popular animosity that was being encouraged by President Wilson and by British propaganda, so that the Germans came to believe that there could be no

peace as long as the Kaiser remained on the throne.

The Prince did all he could to convince the Kaiser that he must go, not only to diminish the tension at home, not only to make peace easier, but also to save the monarchy. Even the Socialists, although theoretically Republican, were not for a Republic as yet. If the Kaiser abdicated, and if the Crown Prince—against whom there was also much ill-feeling—renounced the succession, then some other member of the Royal Family might ascend the throne as the first of Germany's constitutional monarchs.

But it was the Kaiser himself who thwarted this plan. The Prince tried to convince him, but without success. On October 29th he decided to put the matter very plainly, but, to his dismay, he found that the Kaiser was leaving Berlin for Supreme Headquarters at Spa that same evening. He reached him on the telephone, but the Kaiser only gave evasive answers, saying amongst other things that he was afraid of catching influenza, which happened to be prevalent in Berlin.

Henceforth the Kaiser was removed from the influence of the Prince and the politicians, and was under the domination of the military leaders, especially of Hindenburg. It was this that decided not his own abdication, which was inevitable in any

case, but the downfall of the monarchist principle in Germany.

Talk, not only of abdication, but of dethronement became general. "The Kaiser must go," became a popular demand. Prince Max still hoped the Kaiser would abdicate of his own free will, so that a successor to the throne could be appointed. It was not until the naval revolt had begun and a Republic had been proclaimed in Austria that there was much general talk of a German Republic. Every day the Kaiser hesitated made the arrival of the German Republic more certain.

Hindenburg and the generals at Supreme Headquarters were in an extraordinary predicament. They were bound by all their deepest sympathies, by honor, tradition, sentiment, and custom, to look upon the Kaiser as their chief to whom they owed unquestioning obedience, and whose service meant more to them than their own lives. General Groener, who had succeeded Ludendorff, thought that the Kaiser, as a soldier—he was, after all, Supreme War Lord and Commander-in-Chief of all Germany's military and naval forces—could not abdicate, for that would be a form of desertion. So he advised him to place himself at the head of his soldiers and lead a detachment against the enemy. In the days of cavalry charges such an

adventure would have had a certain picturesqueness, and the Kaiser, falling at the head of his squadron, would perhaps have passed into national legend. But in modern warfare it was more difficult to stage the enterprise. The Kaiser might be hit by a machine-gun bullet the moment he put his head over the top of a trench, so that his death would be no different from that of millions of common soldiers. Still, had he been killed, or even wounded, there might have been a change of public opinion in his favor, and at least a political problem that was now so explosive as to threaten the whole social order would have been solved. The Socialists were quite blunt: "The Kaiser or Revolution"—these were their alternatives, and time was very short.

The Kaiser showed no enthusiasm whatever for General Groener's suggestion. He is said to have replied that the "time for heroic gestures is over," which was perhaps true.

On November 8th—the eve of the Revolution in Berlin—Prince Max made another desperate effort to persuade the Kaiser to abdicate. He telephoned to Spa, but the Kaiser replied that he would not abdicate, but take command of his troops and restore order at home. That is to say, he was going to lead his men not against the foreign enemy

but against the German Revolution. He was under the influence of the generals.

But very soon it became clear that the troops would not allow themselves to be commanded. Whole units were refusing to obey orders. General Groener quickly realized what was happening. He informed Hindenburg, who at once recognized the truth. The march of a counter-revolutionary army on Berlin under the Kaiser's leadership was abandoned.

Fritz Ebert, the Socialist leader and soon to be the first President of the German Republic, then presented an ultimatum. If the Kaiser's decision to abdicate were published by nine o'clock on the morning of the 9th, then the Socialists would see that the workmen remained in the factories. If not, they would turn out into the streets and the Revolution would prevail in the capital. All means to prevent it by force were failing, for the troops and even the police were either throwing away theirs arms or openly sympathizing with the workmen.

At a little after eleven o'clock on the morning of the 9th, a telephone call came from Spa, saying that the Kaiser had at last made up his mind to abdicate; the wording of his own statement would follow in half an hour. But half an hour passed, and nothing came from Spa. And soon it was too

late. Berlin was in the power of the Revolution. All that Prince Max hoped for now was that the movement could be kept within legal forms and that the abdication would still help to avert too violent an upheaval.

But the Kaiser's statement did not arrive. So the Prince did a desperate thing. After all, the Kaiser's intention to abdicate had been announced. It was still unconfirmed by the Kaiser himself, but more time could not be lost. So Prince Max of Baden had it publicly proclaimed before he had received confirmation, and only in the intense hope that it would avert civil war.

But the proclamation came too late to make much difference, coming as it did. Civil peace or war was to be decided by others than the Prince and his Government. The Socialists went to him in a deputation led by Ebert. Ebert declared, in the name of the Party, that the Government must pass into the hands of men who enjoyed the confidence of the German people. The Prince thought it over for a little while, and then said he would confer the Chancellorship upon Ebert. It was unconstitutional to do so—the Chancellor does not appoint his own successor—but in the circumstances there was probably no other way.

The Socialists were in power. Prince Max, who

still hoped to save the monarchy by appointing a regent, said to Ebert: "We must solve the question of the regency." Ebert replied: "It is too late," and the other Socialist leaders who were with him echoed: "Too late, too late."

A little later the Kaiser's statement was telephoned through from Spa. It was an astounding document, for the Kaiser offered to abdicate as German Kaiser but insisted on remaining King of Prussia. As he was only German Kaiser by virtue of his Kingship over Prussia, which placed him at the head of the German monarchs, his offer was merely to abolish the title of Kaiser while retaining the reality. But it mattered little now, and the Kaiser might as well have spared himself this last piece of sophistry.

Never had Hindenburg been in such a predicament. Never before had the Kaiser and the nation been divided. He owed absolute allegiance to the Kaiser, and at the same time he felt himself to be in the service of the German nation. And now the Kaiser was repudiated by the nation, while the nation itself was being hard pressed from outside by the foreign enemy and from within by dark forces that Hindenburg hardly understood. No recollection of the Paris Commune, which he had

witnessed in his youth, seems to have passed through his mind.

He was a lonely man in that hour, and was soon to be more lonely. His life's work was undone, his victories had all been in vain. His Kaiser, for whose glory he had labored, had suddenly become a nondescript person of doubtful status, rejected by his own country and execrated by the world. The German Empire, which only a few months ago he had believed victorious, was now a defeated Republic at the mercy of the enemy. The social order in which he had grown up was being shaken. The profession of officer, in which he had gloried, was now the most despised of all professions. Officers in uniform could not show themselves publicly without running the risk of insult. Private soldiers and workmen were tearing the shoulder-straps and the buttons off the uniforms of the officers they met in the street.

The Kaiser, realizing at last that his game was up, released his officers from their oath of allegiance. They were now free to choose what allegiance they wished.

Ludendorff, although living in retirement, was so scared by the Revolution that he fled to Sweden, concealing his face with a pair of spectacles and traveling under the name of Lindström. When he came back he devoted himself to conspiring against

the Republic, and took part in the sanguinary and abortive counter-revolutionary rising at Munich in 1923. Since then he has devoted himself to a campaign against Jews and Freemasons, whom he believes to be plotting for a hegemony over the whole world. Most of the officers of highest rank went into retirement, and have lived in grim but law-abiding hostility to the Republic.

The great problem at Spa was the Kaiser. What was to become of him? After much hesitation he decided, on Hindenburg's advice, to flee across the Dutch frontier. For this flight Hindenburg accepted full responsibility. The Kaiser had not abdicated, he had been dethroned, so that he still regarded himself as a monarch. Hindenburg believed that if the Kaiser remained on German soil he would be arrested by the revolutionaries, and maltreated, or perhaps handed over to the enemy. It was for this reason that the old Field-Marshal wanted to see his chief in safety—for he still looked upon him as his chief. In July, 1922, he wrote a letter to his "Most illustrious, most mighty Kaiser! Most gracious Kaiser, King and Lord," ending it with "In deepest reverence and greatest gratitude I always remain your Imperial and Royal Majesty's most humble von Hindenburg, General Field-Marshal." In this letter he again and ex-

pressly took all the responsibility for the Kaiser's flight to Holland.

Hindenburg did not consider his allegiance at an end just because circumstances had made the Kaiser release his officers from their oath. The conflict of loyalties was not evaded that way by the lonely old man.

It must have seemed to him that there was nothing left to live for. Even before 1914 he had gone into retirement because of old age, and, although he had eagerly accepted service in the War, he had often wished for quiet. He had rather dreaded the triumphal procession in which he would lead his troops through Berlin after the victory he had so confidently expected. And now his master was gone, there was defeat and humiliation, and of his own prestige there was nothing left, though this was what he cared for least.

But somehow or other the Fatherland was in trouble. He did not understand the nature of the trouble, except that it was very desperate. The army was breaking up, but it was still there, and some one must remain in charge of it. It would soon be left defenseless under the terms of the armistice, but some soldier, some one representing the army, would have to help arrange these terms, and they would, once they were accepted, have to

be carried out. And then the army would have to be led back home.

There was much to be done even yet, and on no account would Hindenburg shirk the task, dreadful as it must have been for him. So without personally surrendering his allegiance to the Kaiser, he offered his services to Ebert, the President of the German Republic.

The Hindenburg legend had almost perished. It was reborn at this moment, and before the old Field-Marshal there lay a future more extraordinary than his recent past. Once he had thought his career over, and he had retired into private life, being more than sixty. But his years of eminence had still lain before him, and he became the most adulated of national heroes, only to suffer eclipse and retire once again. He was over seventy, and, thinking to finish his days in the peace of his second retirement, he again achieved unsought eminence, and, at the age of eighty, he was holding an office higher even than that of Field-Marshal.

The foundation of this period of his fame was laid—quite unconsciously, for, even if he had possessed the foresight to see what might one day be possible, he had no personal ambition—when he made the greatest and hardest decision of his life and offered his services to the Republic.

CHAPTER XII

THE REPUBLIC

ON November 5th President Wilson's fourth Note arrived. It became more evident than ever that the terms of the armistice would simply be imposed, and that there would be no discussion at all. The Note also contained an ominous reference to the damage done by the German forces to the territory of the Allies and to the lives and property of civilians. For this damage the Germans were to pay. President Wilson's Note as much as asked the Germans in advance, before the Armistice, without negotiations, and more than half a year before the Peace Treaty was signed, to pay an indemnity of unknown magnitude, an indemnity that afterwards was called "reparations," and was fixed at a figure far higher than Germany's national income, and intended, as nearly as possible, to make Germany pay the cost of the whole War, for which she was made to accept full responsibility. The Germans by this time had also come to realize (what Prince Max of Baden had anticipated long before) that the enemy would probably occupy German soil, and there was quite a scare lest there should be colored troops amongst the future armies of occupation.

On the 7th an Armistice Commission, led by Matthias Erzberger, the very agile and astute leader of the Roman Catholic Center Party, was sent to the front, and was received with studied coldness by Marshal Foch. The terms of the armistice were communicated in outline on the 9th. The Commission asked for power to accept them, only "hoping" that they might perhaps be alleviated in certain details. There was no question of rejecting them.

When the full terms became known they fulfilled the worst anticipations of the Germans. But even then no attempt was made to reject them or even to strike a bargain. They were so onerous, demanding as they did the surrender of such vast stores of war-material and transport in so short a time, that the Germans were convinced it would be technically impossible to carry them out. They believed, for example, that if they surrendered all the motor-lorries and railway transport Marshal Foch demanded, their own supply system would collapse, all the more so as vast quantities of their own material were out of repair. So formidable were the rearguard actions of the Germans, and so orderly their retreat, that the Allied Command had, so it seems, vastly overrated the quantity and quality of their stores, transport and equipment.

Hindenburg loyally superintended the funeral

of all he had worked for and hoped. On the 10th he wired both to the Prussian War Office and to the Armistice Commission that certain of the terms should be modified, and that if the enemy remained obstinate there ought to be a "flaming protest," but, that whatever happened, the armistice must be signed.

Thus the old Field-Marshal gave his consent to a document that ended the War and consummated the total defeat of the German armies.

The armistice came into force at 11 o'clock on the morning of the 11th of November.

Legend has it that Hindenburg led the German troops back into their own country. Legend again is wrong. "Soldiers' Councils" were formed, each unit electing its own. These Councils were not agents of revolution; they were necessary to avert complete anarchy, for the leadership of the officers had collapsed altogether. The rank and file were on their own, and they chose their own leaders, who were often, though not always, their old leaders, that is to say an N.C.O. or even an officer would be appointed Chairman of the Council by the men. In this way chaos was averted, and the army flooded back, out of France and Belgium, and into Germany, without excesses or any grave disorder.

It was not led back; it led itself back with Hindenburg as its nominal Commander-in-Chief.

Nevertheless, the Field-Marshal had done the Republic a real service. The mere fact that he was the Commander-in-Chief of its army made the counter-revolution very difficult. Most of the German generals and many officers of lower rank were counter-revolutionary or at least passively hostile to the Republic. But the flight of the Kaiser had robbed them of their titular leader—there was at that time no one who was definitely a pretender to the German throne—while Hindenburg, their military chief, by accepting the Republic, did something at least to make it acceptable to others, and helped—passively and yet effectively—to protect it against the royalist reaction that was gathering force beneath the surface of German politics.

The new Government was directly menaced, but indirectly fortified, by the extreme revolutionary movement. Was Germany to be a proletarian dictatorship on the Russian model or a constitutional democracy? The question was answered in December, 1918, when, after a discussion that lasted for three days, the Executive Committee of the Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils decided that elections should be held in the following month. Thus the carriers of the German Revolution themselves decided that there would be no

dictatorship, but that the people should elect a "Constituent Assembly," which would determine the future constitution of the realm. Even the issue between republicanism and royalism was left open, for, if the "Constituent Assembly" decided that Germany should become a monarchy once more, then a monarchy she would become. Thus the royalists had a chance to bring about a restoration by constitutional means.

But for those who desired a proletarian dictatorship, that would create the Socialist and class-less state, there was no such opportunity. They therefore took up arms, and, against the Republican Government, born of the political and democratic revolution, there was fought a civil war with the object of converting the political revolution into a social revolution.

This war was desultory, ill organized, but sanguinary. The chief combatants on the revolutionary side were the "Spartacists," so named after Spartacus, the leader of the insurgents in the "Slave War" of ancient Rome. The chief combatants on the other side were officers of the old Imperial army who served in a "defense force" —later on known as the "Reichswehr"—which was organized by the Socialist Minister of War, Gustav Noske. Thus it was that the Republican Government came to stand for "law and order," while

Noske acquired great prestige amongst many who were monarchist at heart.

German industrial workmen were, on the whole, in favor of democratic methods. Nevertheless there was much sympathy for the Spartacists and for their heroic leaders, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. The Spartacist insurrections were suppressed in so ruthless a manner that this sympathy was deepened, although it was not converted into active mass-support—the Spartacists were always in a minority, even amongst the working classes of the German towns. But hatred of Noske grew intense—he was commonly referred to as the "bloodhound" even by workmen who took no part in the fighting. He himself once said that *"some one* had *got* to be the bloodhound," and he certainly fulfilled his self-appointed task with a ruthless determination that has left terrible and undying memories.

Hindenburg stood altogether aloof from this struggle. At one time it had seemed that he and the Kaiser would march on Berlin at the head of their troops and crush the German Revolution. But the political revolution triumphed too quickly and too easily. The social revolution was now crushed not by Hindenburg, but by the Socialist, Noske, and a number of obscure officers who had served under the Field-Marshal in the War.

Early in the year 1919, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were murdered by some of these officers or under their orders. Liebknecht was a man of great courage, but of small ability and intelligence, whereas Rosa Luxemburg was as intelligent as she was heroic. Although she never commanded a very large following, she was nevertheless immensely revered by the workmen of Berlin. Her murder deepened the unpopularity of Noske and his "guards," who were exercising what was no less than a "White Terror," for, quite apart from the killing that was perhaps inevitable in putting down the armed risings, numerous atrocities were committed by troops serving under Noske, and for a long time it was possible for royalist officers to murder workmen and yet escape punishment.

Little by little the army of the Republic became a kind of Praetorian Guard. The Spartacists—who afterwards became the German Communist Party—were totally defeated, and the army, conscious of its own power, began to threaten its own master, the Republican Government.

The future of the Republic was very dark. The terms of the Peace Treaty were so severe that they could not be carried out. The National Assembly met at Weimar, and had to decide whether or not to accept the Treaty. Those who were for accept-

ing it had faith that in time, even if it took a long time, reason would return to a war-maddened Europe, and that the terms of the Treaty would be modified and made humanly possible. Those who argued in this manner won the long and desperate argument, and the Assembly voted for signing the Peace Treaty by 208 votes to 115.

But the alternative—rejection—had at least seemed a possibility, a menace of terrible consequences, for it would have reopened the Great War. The army—the Reichswehr—had vague plans of making common cause with the Russians and holding a common front against Western Europe along the River Oder. The danger passed by, but the army had an augmented sense of its own importance. Some day Germany—with or without Russia—would again be strong enough to reverse the verdict of the Great War and take vengeance on the Western Allies for the defeat and the humiliation they had inflicted on the proud Empire of the Hohenzollerns.

The Peace Treaty was not discussed with the German delegates at Versailles, except in a few minor details. Like the terms of the Armistice the terms of the Peace were not negotiated; they were imposed. The Treaty was signed in the very hall at Versailles where the German Empire had been proclaimed forty-eight years before. The young

Hindenburg had been present at the ceremony then. He was not present now. He was still Commander-in-Chief of what was left of the German Imperial Armies, but he had little to do.

He resigned his command in June, 1919, as soon as the Peace had been signed. His work was over, and he retired into private life.

The severity of the terms all but destroyed the German Republic, and there were two articles in particular which did much both to exasperate and to encourage the militarist reaction that began to turn against the Republican Government when the Spartacists had been crushed. These were Articles 227 and 228, especially the latter.

Under Article 227 of the Peace Treaty the "Allied and Associated Powers publicly arraign William II of Hohenzollern, formerly German Emperor, for a supreme offense against international morality and the sanctity of treaties." A "Special tribunal" composed of five judges appointed by the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan was to try the Kaiser. The decision of this tribunal was to be "guided by the highest motives of international policy."

Under Article 228 of the Treaty, the German Government was compelled to recognize "the right of the Allied and Associated Powers to bring before military tribunals persons accused of having com-

mitted acts in violation of the laws and customs of war" and to "hand over" such persons to these Powers.

On November 1st, 1919, they presented a list of 830 Germans whom they were accusing. Several of the leading German statesmen and politicians —for example, the former Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, and the former German Ambassador at Washington and present German representative with the League of Nations, Count Bernstorff— were on the list. Nearly all the leading German generals and admirals and many princes of royal blood were on it—Hindenburg himself, who, after the Kaiser, was formally responsible for the actions of the German army, Ludendorff, Falkenhayn, Mackensen, Admiral von Tirpitz, Admiral von Scheer, who had commanded in the Jutland battle, the Crown Prince, Prince Rupert of Bavaria, and many others. Hundreds of humble persons were on the list—engineers who had carried out orders to destroy French or Belgian industrial plants during the retreat, naval officers charged with offenses against Allied shipping, doctors charged with the neglect of the wounded prisoners, submarine commanders, and even one woman, who was held responsible for ill-treatment of prisoners.

The "war criminals"—they were known as "criminals" before they had even been tried—were

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wanted by the British (the British section of the list was made up of 112 names), by the French, the Belgians, the Italians, Rumanians, Serbs, Croats and Poles.

The Germans had signed the Treaty under duress. There had been no alternative. But the German Government could not, even if it had wished it, arrest men who, for the most part, had only done their duty as they conceived it. It is true that some of them had been guilty of criminal actions, but even these could count on a good deal of popular sympathy, for no one believed that trials by court-martial in hostile countries would be unbiased, and the verdicts would have no moral force whatever. Besides, offenses had been committed by Allied soldiers as well, and these were not to be tried at all.

The German Government was precariously poised over a semi-anarchic country. The danger was no longer one of revolution, but of counter-revolution. The attempt to arrest men who were largely identifying themselves with the counter-revolution might have precipitated that event, and it would certainly have created a popular rally on their behalf.

The Kaiser was in Holland. The Dutch Government was asked to surrender him, but refused.

Had he surrendered voluntarily, he would have caused the Allies extreme embarrassment.

Offenses, whether "supreme" or not, against "international morality and sanctity of treaties" have no legal existence. The charge was simply a piece of grandiloquent humbug, and to-day, more than ten years after, it is difficult to understand how serious statesmen could have been responsible for such a thing. There could have been no court competent to judge the Kaiser, and there was no law by which he could have been judged. Indeed, no judge could have presided over such a court without discrediting himself. The trial would have been a sensational farce. The Kaiser, with an able counsel, could have held the Allies up to world-wide ridicule, while he himself would have got at least the credit for courage and perhaps the glory of martyrdom. But he missed this chance as he had missed so many others. The Allied Governments must have felt greatly relieved when the Dutch Government refused to hand him over.

The other "war criminals" were to be tried by military courts. But there was no legal foundation for the charges against them. The writ of the Allied Powers did not run in Germany. They were no longer at war, peace had been signed, and no court-martial would have been competent to try the subjects of a foreign Power. Had the "war

criminals" surrendered voluntarily they, too, would have caused great embarrassment, at least in the Western Allied countries, although in Serbia, perhaps, they might have been publicly hanged.

The great sociologist and member of the Democratic Party, Max Weber, called on Ludendorff and asked him to surrender voluntarily. Ludendorff told him to go to Hindenburg, who, after all, had been the Commander-in-Chief. Max Weber remarked that he, Ludendorff, and not Hindenburg, had been the real, though not the nominal, commander, whereupon Ludendorff replied, "Yes, thank goodness." But he refused Max Weber's request.

The Crown Prince courageously offered to surrender on behalf of all, and so did Prince Rupert of Bavaria, who had been one of the most enlightened of all the German commanders, and had spoken for peace even in 1917. But conservative opinion at least condemned even a voluntary surrender.

In the end the German Government offered to have the "war criminals" tried by the Supreme Court at Leipzig. To this the Allies agreed, no doubt secretly glad to escape an embarrassment they themselves had so rashly brought about.

A few of the men on the list were then tried at Leipzig. There were a few convictions and a few

acquittals. Those who were sentenced—one of them, a submarine commander, for an atrocity that was indeed cowardly and inhuman—were allowed to escape from prison a short while after.

There is no doubt that Hindenburg would have surrendered if either the Government or the ex-Kaiser had asked him to do so. As it was, he just awaited events. The events passed by, and he again settled down to a peaceful end of his long life.

The old officers, who, in the early days of the Revolution, could not show themselves in the streets for fear of being insulted, were acquiring a new prestige, at least among the propertied classes. They had crushed the Spartacists, they had preserved "law and order," even if a Republican "law and order," and now public opinion had rallied on their behalf against the former enemy—and, what was more, this enemy had not been able to get his own way. The Allies were not so overwhelmingly powerful as they had seemed.

Nor was Germany any longer quite alone. The Allies had been engaged in supporting the Russian counter-revolution, for they feared that the Germans and the Bolsheviks might join in defense against enemies who were threatening them with national extinction. This fear was in itself a possible advantage to Germany—if it was necessary to

resist the Allies, then she would have a friend in Russia. Or it might be that the Allies would make concessions if she supported them against the Russians.

Any active support of the Russian counter-revolution, even in return for almost any terms from the Allies, would have been intensely unpopular with the German working class. Russia was feared, and Bolshevism was represented as something monstrous and nightmarish to the German public. Nevertheless, for the Russian people there was a great deal of sympathy. They were being blockaded by the Allies, and the Germans knew only too well what blockade meant in terms of human suffering.

In October, 1919, the Supreme Council which represented the Allies invited Germany to coöperate in the blockade of Russia. Hitherto, whenever the Allies had communicated with Germany they had done so in terms that were always discourteous and often insulting. But now, for the first time, she was addressed as though she were not a criminal nation—bad as the Germans were, in the eyes of the Allied Powers, they were not so utterly wicked as the Bolsheviks.

But the German Government, which in spite of the repression it had been carrying out at home was yet bent on international peace, and concerned

for the future of democracy, refused the invitation. It was more clear than ever that the victorious Allies were not all-powerful, and who could tell whether some time or other a situation would not arise in which Germany would be able to carry some weight in the affairs of Europe? In such a situation the Reichswehr—small though it was—would surely have its say.

The victories of the Red Army, and the hostility of public opinion, particularly in England, to the so-called "wars of intervention" against the Bolsheviks, gradually brought these wars to an end. But these very victories encouraged the officers of the Reichswehr who saw in Russia—and for years afterwards continued to see in Russia—a possible ally, and one who had shown considerable military prowess. The all but victorious campaign of the Red Army against the Poles in the year 1920 raised similar hopes, and thus it came about that a lasting friendship grew up between the Russian revolution and the German counter-revolution, between the Bolshevik Government and those militant German reactionaries who afterwards plotted the overthrow of the German Republic, and were only crushed by prolonged and repeated efforts of the German people, particularly organized labor. As late as the autumn of 1926 Russian munitions were sent to Germany for the use of the Reichswehr.

As long as the "wars of intervention" seemed likely to continue there were a number of German commanders who, unlike the Government, believed that it would be advantageous to join the Western Powers in a crusade against Bolshevism. General Ludendorff, having recovered from the scare the Revolution gave him, offered his services to the Allies. General Hoffmann, who had contributed so large a share to the victory of Tannenberg, preached the anti-Bolshevik crusade until his death in 1929. But these offers were all refused—England at least was abandoning the Russian counter-revolution by the time they were made—and in any case, what the Allies had wanted was not to employ a few unemployed generals (of whom they themselves had plenty), but to secure the coöperation of the German Republic against the Bolsheviks. From these developments Hindenburg kept himself entirely aloof—his way and Ludendorff's were going further and further apart: the closest coöperation imaginable was replaced by an antithesis so fundamental that the two one-time friends and collaborators belonged to entirely different worlds.

Hindenburg had retired for the second time in his long life, and wished nothing so much as to be left in peace. The demand for the surrender of the "war criminals" had threatened his peace for a short

while. When the threat had passed by it seemed as though Hindenburg would be forgotten, even as an historical personality. But early in 1920 his peace was menaced once again.

Fritz Ebert had been elected provisional President of the Republic by the National Assembly, but the Constitution decreed that the President should be elected by the German people. In March, 1920, the candidates for the future Presidency were widely discussed. Ebert might be re-elected. A possible candidate was Noske, who was recommended as being a "strong man." But another suggestion was that Hindenburg should stand for the Presidency.

He himself had no wish to do anything of the kind. But he asked the ex-Kaiser—whom he still looked upon as his master—for permission to accept the candidature in case it should be offered to him, leaving it open whether he would accept the offer or not. But all talk of a Presidential election was abruptly terminated by one of the most decisive events in all German history.

The Praetorian Guard which had been fostered by the Government, and a number of anti-republican ex-officers and politicians, believed that the time was ripe for overthrowing the Government and establishing a dictatorship.

Early one morning in that same month of March,

1920, the Berliners woke up to find the city in the hands of the counter-revolution. Troops wearing steel helmets and armed with grenades, rifles, and machine-guns patrolled the streets. Armored cars clattered up and down, the Government buildings were occupied by armed men, and put in a state of defense by barbed-wire entanglements, machine-guns and field-artillery.

This counter-revolutionary attempt is known as the "Kapp Putsch" after its political leader, Dr. Kapp, a bigoted reactionary, who during the War had momentarily emerged from obscure officialdom by means of a ferocious polemic which he had written against the Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, at a time when the Chancellor was not considered sufficiently bellicose by the extremer German patriots.

The Government had vanished, and Dr. Kapp installed himself in the Chancellery.

German labor retaliated by proclaiming a general strike. The effect was absolutely decisive. All trains, trams, buses and taxis stopped, all shops were closed, there was no water and no light. For a few days the Kappists remained in Berlin, mystified by the unforeseen, the intangible and yet deadly weapon that was being used against them. They were quite helpless, and they marched out, totally defeated, while a jeering crowd lined the streets.

Only where the workmen took up arms did the Kappists have any measure of success. In the Ruhr, for example, civil war broke out, and against the well-armed troops the workmen, who had rifles, but few machine-guns and hardly any artillery or mine-throwers, had little chance, and were defeated. But the few local successes of the Kappists did nothing to outweigh their total discomfiture by the general strike.

The Government and the National Assembly reassembled at Stuttgart. Noske had to resign. The back of the German royalist reaction had been broken; its subsequent attempts to recover from this great and decisive defeat became progressively more and more hopeless, although they caused much bloodshed.

Hindenburg remained aloof from all these events, while Ludendorff became implicated even more deeply.

These civil conflicts did not only keep on littering the streets of German cities with dead and wounded, they also delayed the economic recovery that was as urgent as it was difficult, for the "return of reason" which German liberal politicians had anticipated when they pleaded for accepting the Peace Treaty was very slow in coming.

The year 1921 was as tragic as the year 1920. The great German industrial area of Upper Silesia

was to have been given to Poland, but doubts as to whether the inhabitants were not more German than Polish had made the Allies agree to the test of a plebiscite. The Poles had no very real claim to Upper Silesia, but the inhabitants are largely Roman Catholic and speak a Polish dialect. They had been treated with much unfair discrimination by Prussian Protestant officialdom, and in 1919 some local insurrections that were partly Polish and partly revolutionary had been ruthlessly crushed by a German frontier defense force, the *Grenzschutz*. Thus there was considerable anti-German feeling, which found expression in a large pro-Polish vote when the plebiscite was held in March, 1921. This vote was a minority of the total poll, but it was concentrated in the eastern and south-eastern regions of Upper Silesia. These were assigned to Poland, and with them immensely valuable industrial plants that had been built up with German capital and enterprise. Soon after the plebiscite the Poles tried to take the whole of Upper Silesia by promoting an armed insurrection. The fighting between Polish insurgents and German volunteers was particularly ferocious, and appalling atrocities were committed on both sides. But the insurrection was a failure, and the combatants were separated by a contingent of British troops from the Rhineland.

The insurrection helped German militarist reaction to recover some of the prestige it had lost by the defeat of the Kappists. The Germans with few arms fought against insurgents who were better armed and superior in numbers. Warlike emotions ran very high, and battles were described in terms that had not been used since the German victories in the Great War. Nor, when the insurrection was over, did the German military formations disappear altogether—instead they went to swell the ranks of those who were conspiring to overthrow the Republic.

This conspiracy was desperate and ruthless. Secret military clubs and societies existed all over the country. Their members were skilled and trained for civil war. Those suspected of betraying the rules of the society were murdered by the so-called "Feme," which was a kind of vendetta. Political assassinations were carried out. Erzberger was assassinated, and then Rathenau, who was one of the most enlightened and distinguished of modern German politicians. These two murders are well known because the victims were so prominent, but they were only two amongst a great many. The political murders committed in Germany since the Revolution—nearly all of them by counter-revolutionaries—number between three and four hundred. The work of the secret societies

was made all the easier because the German judiciary was, for the most part, anti-republican, and if the murderers were caught at all they could count on a good deal of sympathy from their judges. Most of these murderers have remained unpunished to the present day.

Ludendorff drifted into active partisanship against the Republic. He no longer saw his old collaborator Hindenburg, and never even corresponded with him. Had Hindenburg even expressed sympathy with the secret societies, he would have become at least their hero and perhaps their chief. But while still considering himself the servant of the ex-Kaiser he would not take sides against the Republic he had served when it came into existence. And little by little he came to be forgotten, except as belonging to a dead and receding past.

The year 1923 was more disastrous than '21 and '20. The French invaded the Ruhr, and, in the hope of separating the Rhineland from the rest of Germany, armed a nondescript band of desperadoes who called themselves "Separatists," and tried to create an autonomous Rhenish Republic. The Germans offered passive resistance, both to the French and the Separatists. The struggle, although almost completely passive, was not entirely unbloody, but economic disruption caused wretch-

edness far greater and perhaps ever more deadly than the death and the wounds incidental to the tremendous tension between the Germans and their enemies.

The exchange value of the mark, which had begun to fall steadily even during the War (German war-time finance was largely inflationist because it was confidently assumed that the Allies would have to bear the cost of the War), descended like an avalanche in 1923. The paper currency became worthless almost while it was being held in the hand, and wages paid one day were hardly worth the paper they were printed on the next day. The entire Ruhr—one of the world's greatest industrial areas—was so paralyzed by the French invasion and the German resistance that it was like a vast cemetery.

Militant nationalism was immensely stimulated, and the secret societies were gathering strength for an open struggle. Ludendorff came to Berlin at the beginning of November to attend a conference on the disposition of secret armed forces round the city. A "national dictatorship" was to be proclaimed at Munich, where the counter-revolutionary movement was led by Ludendorff himself, and by an Austrian adventurer named Adolf Hitler, with the connivance of the Bavarian Premier, von Kahr, a bigoted provincial who was

immensely inflated by dreams of one day becoming dictator over all Germany. The Bavarians were to march on Berlin while their Northern fellow-conspirators closed in on the capital.

But the plan—which was far less determined and formidable than the Kapp Putsch—broke down of its own inadequacy. The insurgents, led by Ludendorff, marched through the streets of Munich, but a few shots fired by the police dispersed them, and the march on Berlin came to nothing.

In Saxony and in Hamburg the Communists, whose members had been increased by the radicalism which the extreme misery of the poorer masses had fostered, prepared for armed insurrection. Since the defeat of the Spartacists there had been only one Communist outbreak, the Central German insurrection, led by Max Hoelz, who in the English newspapers of the time was aptly called "the German Robin Hood." This insurrection was ruthlessly suppressed. And now, in 1923, the Government troops invaded Bavaria, Saxony, and also Thuringia, where a Socialist Government was in power. Only in Hamburg did the Communists fight. They held out against a force of armed police, but were crushed with heavy losses after a few days.

So distracted and so wretched was the condition of Germany that it seemed as though a break-up

might come, that Bismarck's unifying work would be undone, and that the Republic might disintegrate into a number of separate States. Armed revolution was suppressed, and armed counter-revolution collapsed through defective leadership and organization, but economic reaction, which was not specifically monarchist, threatened to undo whatever German labor had achieved since the collapse of the Empire. Inflation had robbed the trade unions of their funds, and they seemed to be at the mercy of the employers. But the winter of 1923 to 1924 was a winter of long, desperate strikes carried on with little or no strike pay. In May, 1924, the Ruhr miners struck, again without money, and held out tenaciously, although they were starving. None of these strikes—for shorter hours and better pay—was victorious. Nevertheless they did hold up, and decisively, the advance of economic reaction.

The year 1924 was the year of stabilization—economic, financial and political. It was the first year in which it could be said that the German Republic was out of danger. The danger had been chiefly that of counter-revolution. The Spartacist risings had been tragic in the sense that many lives had been lost, but at no time had there been any danger in Germany of what was loosely called "Bolshevism," whereas the danger of counter-revo-

lution and of a dictatorship akin to that of the Fascists in Italy was very real, and indeed it is a wonder that German democracy survived.

The constitutional reforms carried out while Prince Max of Baden was Chancellor remained intact: so did the Republican form of Government. Indeed of German royalism little more was left than a vague though rather widespread sentiment that could no longer be called a political movement. In other words, the political revolution held its own through disastrous years, and forces were released that, given time, might promote social changes cumulatively amounting to social revolution.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PRESIDENCY

IT is probable that if those who are familiar with the history of the German Republic were asked to say who was its ablest politician, most of them would reply, "Fritz Ebert." He was born at Heidelberg in 1871. He was still a boy when he was apprenticed to a saddler. Then he went on the "Wanderung" so common in those days—that is to say, he wandered all over Germany, earning his keep by doing odd jobs, and sleeping in barns and outhouses, or enjoying the hospitality that seems to have been greater then than it is now. For a few years he edited a little Socialist paper at Bremen. In 1900 he became a so-called "Labor Secretary," that is to say, a kind of "poor man's lawyer." These "Labor Secretaries" were kept by the Socialist Party and gave legal advice or help to working men and women who could not afford to engage an ordinary counsel. These "Secretaries" gave the Party much of its ever-growing popularity.

Ebert was a man of great determination, of sober intelligence and realism. His diplomatic skill would have done credit to a statesman. His prestige with the Party grew little by little, and with a steady progress. He does not seem to have been

at all ambitious. He never did anything sensational. He was always simple and unassuming. It seemed almost natural that, as the Great War went on, he, who combined such steadiness with skill, should become the Party's leader. This position made him successor to Prince Max of Baden in the chancellorship almost as a matter of course. And it was almost a matter of course that he became the first President of the German Republic. There could indeed have been no more conspicuous outward symbol of revolution—that the throne held for so long by a glittering succession of proud potentates should be abolished altogether, and that William of Hohenzollern should be succeeded by Fritz Ebert, who had been a saddler's apprentice, and had earned a livelihood by precarious means.

When Ebert died of a sudden illness in March, 1925, the event was received with very mixed feelings. He was still hated by reactionaries whose dream he had done so much to destroy. He was hated by those who had fought for the social revolution in the streets of Berlin, and by the communists who were still working for it. But he was popular amongst those who believed in Republican democracy and in non-violent progress towards a new social order, that is to say, the majority of politically-minded Germans.

Thus it was that his funeral was attended by crowds bigger than any ever known in Berlin.

Republican colors were flown at half-mast from all public buildings. The globes of the street-lamps were draped in black. Hugh black obelisks were placed on either side of the path of the funeral procession. The procession itself was led by steel-helmeted, gray-uniformed mounted lancers, with black and white pennons, looking like medieval knights. They were followed by machine-gun detachments and a battery of field artillery. The officers were draped in the Presidential Flag, a black eagle with red beak and claws on a golden field edged with red. University students—who had so often proclaimed and shown devotion, at times a blind devotion, to the monarchy—formed the most brilliant group in the procession that honored the first President of the Republic: they carried their dueling swords in their hands, they wore shining Wellington boots, white leather gauntlets, many-colored pill-box caps, green, azure, and scarlet costumes, so that together they looked like a great floral tribute to the dead President.

Who was to succeed him? There was no German of unique eminence who seemed obviously suitable. There was no one above party and yet popular, at least not in politics, and so the campaign for the

Presidential election was dominated by party politics.

The Conservatives—that is to say, the National People's Party, and the one time National Liberal Party who were now called the People's Party—put forward an obscure and wholly undistinguished official, Dr. Jarres, who had been Mayor of Duisburg, and Vice-Chancellor and Home Secretary in the Marx Cabinet, as their candidate. He had been politically conspicuous only once, when he had been in favor of abandoning the Ruhr and the Rhineland to the French with the idea of recovering these regions by military force at some later and unspecified date. But election propaganda attributed all kinds of merits to him, no doubt in the expectation that some of them at least would stick. In the campaign he opposed those arbitration treaties and pacts which, under the name of Locarno, were soon to become one of the foundations of European peace.

The Roman Catholic Center Party put forward Dr. Marx, a mild-mannered pietist with a cherubic face and a genius for trickiness.

The Democrats put forward Dr. Hellpach, a talented Professor of Psychology whose high intellectual idealism was a complete misfire in the rather unscrupulous rough-and-tumble vote-catching of the election campaign.

The Socialists were certainly happiest in their choice. Their candidate was Dr. Braun, the former Prussian Premier, a man of peaceful character combined with downright honesty and intelligence.

The Communist candidate was a workman named Thälmann. He was almost illiterate and wholly guileless in political matters. But he was a workman, and, with his heavy features and huge ponderous fists, he looked his part.

These were the major candidates. There were a few minor candidates who had no chance whatever of winning, but who had been put forward by local patriots or enthusiasts. One of these was Ludendorff, the candidate of the "National Socialists" and the "Freedom Party," two small groups with names that rather veiled their reactionary, Fascist character. No one seems to have thought that Hindenburg would be a suitable candidate.

If, in a German Presidential election, no candidate obtains an absolute majority over all the voters, there has to be a second election in which the candidate who gets the largest number of votes is the winner.

About 27,000,000 voters went to the polls on that Sunday in March, 1925, but no candidate got above half that number of votes, so that a second election had to follow.

Dr. Jarres got most of all—10,787,870. Dr.

Braun came next with 7,838,676, then came Marx with 3,988,559, then Thälmann with 1,885,770, and lastly Dr. Hellpach with 1,582,414—lastly, that is to say, amongst the major candidates. Amongst the minor candidates the Bavarian Premier, Dr. Held, came first with close on a million votes. Ludendorff polled only a little over two hundred thousand. All the other fancy candidates together polled only thirty thousand—amongst them the former Kaiser, who lived in exile at Doorn in Holland.

It was clear that, unless there was some change, Dr. Jarres would win the second round. So the Center Party and the Socialists struck a bargain. Prussia was in a Government crisis at the moment, and was still without a Cabinet. The position of Prussian Premier is one of the most important in Germany. The Center agreed to support the renewed Premiership of Dr. Braun, while the Socialists agreed to support Dr. Marx in the second Presidential election. The Democrats, realizing that Dr. Hellpach had no chance at all, agreed also to support Dr. Marx.

This combination meant the sure defeat of Dr. Jarres. Thereupon the Conservative Party hit upon the idea of asking Hindenburg to stand. He was the victor of Tannenberg, he had been Field-Marshal of the German Imperial Forces, but he

had also placed his services at the disposal of the German Republic. Since then he had kept aloof from politics, and his fame, unlike Ludendorff's, was undimmed by conspiracies or even by partisanship. He was a truly national figure, and above party.

He was living at Hanover, where the municipality had presented him with a house. His name had rarely appeared in the Press since the end of the War, except as a memory and, now and again, in favorable contrast to Ludendorff, whose political activities and whose divorce late in life had estranged even monarchists. The suggestion that he might stand for the Presidency in 1920 hardly reached the newspapers at all.

Most of the German officers had to leave the service after the Revolution, for the army was reduced to a maximum strength of 100,000 by order of the victors. The younger ones were forced to find non-military work in order to support themselves. They would consider themselves lucky when they could secure jobs as a secretary to some yacht club or some tennis association. If the members (as was usually the case) were staunch monarchists, these men were treated with the deference they expected as ex-officers of the Kaiser's army. Most of the younger ex-officers, however, went into business of some kind. It was only the more des-

perate or adventurous who were active in the secret military societies. Many of the older men, who had become generals, or reached other high military ranks during the War, lived on their pensions, such as they were. Almost all these ex-officers in the German army, apart from those who became fanatically active monarchists, washed their hands of the new régime. They pretended that politics did not exist.

Hindenburg sympathized deeply with this "Weltflucht," this flight from the real world, of his former colleagues, though he himself never shared it to any marked extent.

"I understand this idea of 'Weltflucht,'" he writes, "which obsessed a great many officers because of the demolition of everything which was dear to them. The 'desire to ignore a world' in which passions have been stirred up which distort the real value of our people beyond recognition, is humanly understandable, and yet I must say frankly what I, personally, think about this:

"Commanders in the German army, which was once so great and proud, why do you despair? Think of the men, who, more than a hundred years ago, created a new spirit in the Fatherland for us. Their religion was their belief in themselves, and in the sacredness of their cause. . . . I am confident that this time too, as in years gone by,

some continuity with our great past will be preserved, and where this continuity has been demolished, it will be reëstablished."

Hindenburg's faith in his Fatherland and in his Emperor was as complete as it had been when he was a boy. "Germany is in a state of profound collapse," he said once, shortly after the War, in a speech to the school-children of Hanover, "the glorious times of the Emperor and his heroes have passed, but you children who are singing 'Deutschland über Alles' here before me will renew the old Empire. You will overcome this terrible time, the Revolution. You will see a revival of the glorious days of victorious wars, and your teachers are confronted with the beautiful task of educating you in this hope."

This was Hindenburg's attitude while a "storm of wild political passions" was occurring in Germany. Though in theory he knew that this storm was going on within the Reich, he was so accustomed to living in his immediate surroundings alone, that his private life remained peaceful and untroubled.

Very soon after his retirement he began to write his Memoirs, which, after all, is usually a sign that a man considers his active life as ended. He also wrote letters to the ex-Kaiser, and dutifully answered all the messages he received from his mon-

archist admirers. For the first time in his life he was free to devote himself to collecting pictures of the Madonna, which, together with hunting, has always been his great hobby. The walls of one room in the house at Hanover are completely covered with paintings, etchings, plaques and ikons representing the Mother and Child.

In 1921, Hindenburg was as faithful to his ex-Kaiser and to the monarchy as he had always been. His mind continued to dwell on the great past of the German Empire. He was also beginning to think of the German Revolution in terms other than "wild floods," or "storms," or "political passions." In connection with his somewhat vague thoughts about the German Revolution, he began for the first time, hesitatingly, it is true, but he did begin to question the actions of his Emperor. "I know that your Majesty would not have left Germany," he wrote to the ex-Kaiser at Doorn in 1921, "if your most exalted Majesty had not realized that I, as the Chief of the General Staff, considered this step necessary both for the welfare of your Majesty and for the good of the Fatherland." He closed this letter as follows: "May I again be permitted to assure your Majesty that throughout my life my loyalty to my Kaiser, my King, and my Master has been unbounded, and that it will always be so. I will for ever be willing to assume

the responsibility for your Majesty's decision to leave Germany in 1918."

Only once, after his retirement and before he became President of the German Republic, did Hindenburg appear in public, and then his appearance was not a success. It was in June, 1922, when he reviewed a National Parade and Demonstration in Königsberg. He went to Königsberg in his old uniform and adorned with all his medals, and by this time, as can be readily understood, a great array of these decorated his broad chest. In 1922 the inflation, and with it the social unrest in Germany, had progressed very far, and the Prussian Minister of the Interior, who had been informed of this Nationalist Demonstration, sent a wire to Königsberg forbidding the meeting, that is to say, he forbade school-children and all members of the new German army, the Reichswehr, to attend. The Prussian Minister of the Interior was not obeyed, either by Hindenburg or any one else. The Communists, however, attended the Demonstration too, with the result that serious riots, in which a number of people were killed, took place. Hindenburg himself was so appalled at the outcome of the demonstration that he never appeared in public again until the day on which he took his oath as President.

At first he declined to stand. He preferred to end his old age in peace—he was close on eighty

at this time. But he was urged again and again, and finally Admiral von Tirpitz called on him at his home at Hanover, and convinced him that by standing for the Presidency he would again be doing his country a service. Hindenburg agreed at last.

It was a political sensation of the first order. Dr. Stresemann, the great Foreign Secretary, was deeply concerned because of the impression Hindenburg's Presidency might make abroad, particularly in France. The Communists started a fanatical campaign against the "mass murderer" and the "bloody general." Very many who were by no means hostile to him simply said, "He is too old," and others—again not necessarily hostile—said, "He knows nothing about politics."

But it soon became clear that Hindenburg would poll a very large number of votes, though there was general doubt as to whether he would poll more than Dr. Marx, behind whom such a powerful concentration was taking place. Something would depend on the Communists: would they support Marx so as to help defeat the "mass murderer" or would they simply be doctrinaire and again vote for their own candidate Thälmann, who had no chance at all?

Dr. Jarres was thrust back into the obscurity from which he had been dragged and the National

People's Party—or "Nationalists" as they are usually called outside Germany—began a powerful campaign of publicity for their new candidate. In their manifesto to the electorate they proposed as President "a man whose name all the world over denotes honor, loyalty, energy, fortitude . . . namely Field-Marshal von Hindenburg. . . . He was your leader in great and hard times. You followed him willingly, you adored him, he did not forsake you. Therefore fight for him now as well, now that he is your old leader once again, now that he desires to lead you so as to serve his Fatherland in peace and reconstruction. Our watchword will therefore be: 'With Hindenburg to victory for the unity of all Germans, for Christian life, and social progress, for the greatness and freedom of the Fatherland.'"

The "Society of War Veterans" drew up a manifesto proclaiming to those who had fought in the Great War that Hindenburg "is blood of your blood, a veteran like yourselves, a comrade amongst comrades, true as no one else is true."

The "Deutsche Adelsgenossenschaft," a society of German nobles, many of whom had fallen on bad days, addressed Hindenburg as "the German, the Christian, the hero."

The Communists renewed their shouts of "mass murderer," "bloodhound," "butcher of German

workmen" and were joined by the Socialists. Reminiscences of the "Anbindung"—the "Field Punishment Number 1" which Hindenburg had wanted to reintroduce—of the Belgian deportations and other deeds for which he was held responsible were revived. His utterances, such as "the War is doing me as much good as a bath-cure" and "no nation with a drop of manly blood and honor in its veins will ever subject its existence and its national honor to any kind of arbitration by other nations" and "the more mercilessly a war is fought the more merciful it is in reality because it is thereby brought to an end all the sooner."

The election campaign was fought with great vehemence. Some quite irrelevant emotions were stirred up—for example, anti-Semitic feeling broke out in denunciations of the "international Jewish spirit." One of the champions of anti-Semitism was—and still is—Ludendorff. He threw Judaism and Freemasonry into one sack and beat them for striving after world-domination by the control of international finance and the destruction of the patriotic virtues. Later on he preached a return to the cult of Thor and Odin.

Perhaps there was no one less excited on the coming election than Hindenburg himself. Even in the first year or two of the War he had felt old and tired, despite his victories and his renown.

Once—in 1915—he admitted that he was not at all eager to take part in the triumphal entry when the victorious troops would return to Berlin, but would rather put on civilian clothes and get out at some small station. "I do not like being fêted," he had said, "and I would rather pass the few years I shall have to live after the War in peace." Ten years had passed since then and he was aspiring to the highest eminence in the land—with great reluctance, after repeated refusals, and only because he had been persuaded, chiefly by Admiral von Tirpitz—that by becoming President he would again be making for the good of the German people.

He himself took very little part in the campaign. He received the Press at Hanover and, in reply to the talk that he was a militarist and a decrepit old dodderer, he declared that if he were elected he would "go to Berlin neither on a gun limber nor in a bath chair."

The Communists decided not to vote for Dr. Marx, but once more to present Thälmann as a candidate. Thus they substantially increased Hindenburg's chances.

Hindenburg certainly did not play the militarist. The few words he uttered during the campaign were free from the flamboyance of the manifestoes issued by his supporters. On April 25th each of the three candidates—Hindenburg, Marx and Thäl-

mann—broadcast his appeal to the electorate. Hindenburg's statement was moderate and pacific. "An attempt must be made," so he declared, "to carry out the international agreements of recent years, but if the future shows that Germany cannot carry out her obligations, then better ways must be sought in peaceful collaboration with these states." And "It has always been my most sacred endeavor to prevent renewed horrors of war."

Polling day was on the 26th. It was a day of drizzling rain. But political emotions began to boil over. There was some rowdyism and even some fighting, particularly between Fascists and Communists. Revolver shots were fired and there were several killed and wounded.

As the results were announced it became clear that the poll for Hindenburg had been very heavy. The Nationalists had successfully revived the quiescent legend. But it was not only for the "victor of Tannenberg" that the electors voted, but also for the man who had accepted service with the Republic in the days of defeat and threatening anarchy, and not only for the candidate of nationalism and monarchist reaction but also for the man who was "above party."

Dr. Marx was a party man and little else. Nevertheless, he was supported not only by his own powerful Center Party and the greater part

of the Roman Catholic votes, as well as by the Socialists and Democrats, but also by the many who could not forget that Hindenburg had once been the servant of the former Kaiser and a symbol of the Imperial militarism that had helped to bring about the Great War.

As the returns mounted up there was no telling who was the winner, the race between Hindenburg and Marx was so close. On the whole it seemed that Marx was leading. Thälmann was, of course, out of it. The cities and the Rhineland seemed to be showing a majority for Marx. It would take some time before the returns from the remote country districts would be issued in Berlin and they might redress the balance in Hindenburg's favor —particularly those from the Eastern regions, and most of all, from East Prussia, where the legend was born.

They did indeed redress the balance. Hindenburg polled 14,639,395 votes, Marx 13,753,642. Hindenburg had won by a margin of more than 800,000. Thälmann polled close on two million. Thus, by deciding to put him forward as candidate in the second election, the Communists had helped Hindenburg to victory.

There was a good deal of concern abroad, though more in France than in England and America. The French Press showed skepticism as to whether

Germany was fit, after all, to become a member of the League of Nations and whether it would ever be safe to evacuate the Rhineland.

It was in May that Hindenburg held his triumphal entry into the capital—the entry he had dreaded so much ten years before was taking place for reasons and in circumstances he could never have dreamt of. But he wore civilian clothes—a dark suit and a silk hat. He was accompanied by his son—who was over fifty—and his son's wife.

Berlin was gay with flags, the old Imperial black, white and red preponderating over the Republican black, red and gold, except in the poorer quarters where there was also a fair sprinkling of red. Flags were flying over the foreign Embassies—the tricolor over the French, and the red with golden hammer and sickle over the Russian Embassy. A big street trade was done in flags (both Imperial and Republican), in photographs of Hindenburg (both in Field-Marshal's uniform and in civilian dress) and in swasticas (the symbol of anti-Semitism in Germany).

When Ebert died it had been arranged—largely by the wish of the Chancellor, Dr. Luther—that the path of the funeral procession should be as short as possible. There was still a good deal of anti-Socialist bias in high quarters, and the funeral of a distinguished man is a pageant, and a pageant

President von Hindenburg and Hugo von Eckener

is popular propaganda for whatever the deceased stood for.

The path of Hindenburg's drive through the streets of Berlin was made as long as possible. That, no doubt, was one reason why the crowds that lined the streets seemed so much thinner than the huge compact masses that had thronged to bid their last farewell to Fritz Ebert.

It is said that when Hindenburg had been elected he felt obliged to read the Constitution of the German Republic and that, having done so, declared that this document, born of the upheaval that overthrew the Hohenzollerns and all he had once revered, was "not so bad after all." In any case he would now have to take the oath. He had served the Republic in the hour of its chaotic birth, but he had taken no oath. He had all along looked upon the former Kaiser as his master and had in his letters addressed him as such. But now he would have to serve the Republic even if it should mean disservice to William of Hohenzollern.

The Reichstag was gay with flags and flowers. The dais was covered with the black-red-gold of the Republic and behind it hung the Presidential flag. The British Ambassador, Lord D'Abernon, the Papal Nuncio Pacelli and the rest of the diplomatic corps were present. Amongst the deputies were Ludendorff and von Tirpitz. The Socialists,

who were the largest party, all wore red flowers in their buttonholes.

Hindenburg arrived at noon. The whole of the packed House rose to its feet. The Communists with one voice shouted, "Down the Monarchy! Up the Soviet Republic!" and left the House in a body.

Hindenburg stepped on the dais. He looked almost like some primeval giant, with huge broad shoulders, hanging arms, and ponderous features. Those features were reminiscent of the colossal wooden statues of Hindenburg that were set up during the War. They were of a pale grayish color and almost expressionless. His white hair was close-cropped like a soldier's and his heavy white mustache added to the statuesque appearance of his features. There was indeed something monumental, epic and legendary about him.

Loebe, a Socialist, the Speaker of the Reichstag, administered the oath, which Hindenburg read from a large sheet of paper. He read it in a deep, firm voice. It contained the words "both the Reichstag and the President of the Reich embody the sovereignty of the people which is the foundation of our entire constitutional existence."

Thus the great achievement of the German Revolution—the sovereignty of the German people—was entrusted to the guardianship of the one-time Field-Marshal of the German Imperial Armies.

The "Nationalists" were jubilant. Their newspaper, *Der Tag,* wrote: "We breathe freely once again and welcome the new light. It is as though all we had experienced since 1918 had been no more than an evil dream"—apparently the writer in the *Tag* looked back upon the years 1914-18 as idyllic. Another Nationalist paper, the *National Post,* wrote: "How could we not have confidence that he will lead us out of night and darkness up into radiant day!"

The President of the German Republic has considerable power. He is in constant touch with the Premier and can exercise an influence on the formation of Cabinets. In the negotiations between Parties before a Cabinet is formed—negotiations that in Germany often take weeks—his wishes may carry real weight. Also, in times of trouble, the Constitution can, by its own Article 48, be suspended and the President then rules by decree.

There was, when Hindenburg was elected, and there is still, a good deal of royalist sentiment in Germany. His election created the hope that he would be a kind of throne-warmer for the Hohenzollerns, that he would promote the ideals of the foundered Empire and, in the end, redress the defeat that was consummated by the Treaty of Versailles. And amongst Republicans there were

corresponding fears and in France a certain anxiety persisted for a long time.

But whatever Hindenburg's own sympathies may have been—and there could be no doubt that they were deeply colored by Germany's Imperial past, and by affection for the House of Hohenzollern—his whole being, since he had taken the oath of allegiance to the Republic, was dominated by the resolve to respect that oath to the absolute exclusion of every other interest, bias or feeling.

Once or twice the new President did seem to reveal a certain deviation from the impartiality required by his office, but these deviations were slight and they did not last. His resolve did not weaken; on the contrary, it became a kind of unalterable instinct, a kind of second nature to him.

Thus it was that his Presidency saw a great consolidation of the Republic. He was a keen disappointment to the extremer royalists, but he also took the sharpness out of the royalist movement—if a widespread sentiment without any leadership can be called a movement—simply because he was Hindenburg, the victor of Tannenberg, under whose leadership the German nation fought and almost won a war against the greater part of the world. If he was not a monarch he was the next best thing to a monarch, and around him there

was that atmosphere of heroic legend and romance that is part of popular monarchies.

His election was followed by big events in German foreign policy. The Locarno Protocol was signed by which Germany's Western frontier was declared inviolable, its inviolability being guaranteed by England and Italy, Germany for ever renouncing any claims to Alsace-Lorraine. The German Government also pledged itself never to seek an alternative of her Eastern frontiers save by peaceful means. Germany also took her place with the Great Powers as a permanent member of the League Council and she was one of the first to accept the American proposals for the "Outlawing of War" that culminated in the Peace Pact of 1928. Germany's great Foreign Minister, the late Dr. Stresemann, who could not conceal his anxiety when Hindenburg stood for the Presidency, was able to develop his foreign policy with the full support of the President.

Thus there has been no revival of militarism during Hindenburg's Presidency. And so much has the Republic system become a matter of habit in Germany that it is not seriously challenged. A return of the Hohenzollerns or of any monarch to the throne is hardly to be as much as thought of. Hindenburg is ruling in their stead.

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